MOVIE CAVALCADE

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MOVIE CAVALCADE

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MOVIE CAVALCADE

The Story of the Cinema
—its Stars, Studios and
Producers

By

F. MAURICE SPEED

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

MOVIE CAVALCADE has flouted all the rules of publishing. Like its author, it is unconventional. Usually a book of this kind is first published at a price so high that only libraries and a comparatively few people with spare cash in their pockets can buy it. Later, when that public is exhausted—and not before, naturally—a cheap price edition of the book is produced by the publisher. Last of all, perhaps, it will appear in a paper cover as something to be bought on a station bookstall before a long journey.

MOVIE CAVALCADE has reversed this process, however. Starting life as the first really cheap history of the cinema, in paper cover, at 6d., it rapidly exhausted two large editions. Not only that; both I and the publisher have been worried ever since by a constant stream of requests for copies.

Spurred on by these letters and by verbal pleas for a more durable stiff-bound edition, I approached the publisher with a view to producing a small, special, illustrated library edition, at a price which would cover these extra refinements.

To my astonishment the publisher, surely the most understanding of his race, agreed to my suggestion—no, more than that, he was even enthusiastic about it!

So here it is, the third edition of MOVIE CAVALCADE; in a new overcoat, but essentially the same as before. I have gone through the M.S. carefully and corrected it here and there (using advice given me in many cases by eagle-eyed and knowledgeable readers, from whom I have had many hundreds of interesting and helpful letters) and added a footnote in order to bring it up-to-date.

To one reader in particular, Mr. Rex Coley, I owe a special debt of gratitude, for he went through the book with a small-tooth comb and a magnifying glass, pointing out printing errors I had not noticed as well as various little slip-ups of which I had been guilty. To Mr. Coley, and to all those other very helpful people, as well as to those who found nothing to grumble at but were embarrassing in their praise, I send my very sincere thanks.

HARROW, *December*, 1943.

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For the loan of stills and permission to re-produce them in this issue of MOVIE CAVALCADE I am greatly indebted to a number of people, including Frank Fowell, Stanley Irving, Dorothy Freeman, R. Gottstein, C. H. Mitchell, Rodney Ackland, and Maurice Elvey, as well as the ever-helpful film companies, all of whom gave me the run of their collections.

PART 1

AND THAT'S HOW THE MOVIES WERE BORN.

In 1872 a certain Edward Muybridge from Kingston-on-Thames was working on a photographic survey along the coast of the Pacific. At the time the Governor of California and some racing friends of his were engaged on a heated argument as to whether a horse did, or didn't, lift all four feet off the ground at once as it galloped.

The Governor thought the horse did; some of his friends thought the opposite; both sides were prepared to back their opinion with large sums of money. It was at this point that for some unexplained reason, Muybridge was approached to settle the controversy.

Muybridge thought a great deal and then worked out a solution which, as is generally the case with apparently insolvable problems, was quite simple. He proved that a horse *does* lift all four feet clear of the ground at one point of the gallop. He won the Governor his bets, but he only did so at a cost, to the Governor, of some forty thousand pounds.

The solution was this: It was apparent to Muybridge that if *all* the movements of a horse could be photographed as it raced along the problem would solve itself. So he rigged up 24 cameras in a row, each camera one foot from the next, and with a thread attached to each shutter and running across the race-track. As the horse ran by it broke the threads in turn and so operated the cameras. The result was ten photographs, each photograph showing the horse's position at a different point in its stride.

As in 1872 the photographic film had not yet been invented it was necessary to use plates and it is interesting to note that in order to have taken the number of pictures that are thrown on the screen by the modern projector in one minute a thousand cameras in series would have been needed.

Although Muybridge's scheme was not moving pictures in the sense we know them to-day, it was the first successful

Comedy : Greatest comedian of all, one of the few truly great artists that the movies have produced, is Charles Spencer Chaplin, Londoner born and educated, who began his stage career at an early age by joining the " Six Lancashire Lads." Later he became a member of another famous music hall troupe, the " Mumming Birds," and so made his first step towards the Top Of The Bill in England and America. Ventured somewhat reluctantly into the movies in 1913. This is a scene from " The Emigrant " (1916). (By courtesy of Paul Rotha who supplied Still from his collection).

endeavour to photograph actual motion and as such it can be said to have been the birth of the great idea that was to lead eventually to the modern movie. For Muybridge photographed movement and movement is still the basic principle of all good films. It was the first weak and faltering step towards a form of amusement that now entertains more than 20 million people a week in the cinemas of this country alone (and about 4 times that number in the United States).

It was obvious, however, that no real progress could be made towards moving pictures while photographic plates had to be used, as to photograph movement an incredible, certainly an impracticable, number of cameras would have to be used. Consequently various people who were by now working on this fascinating problem all began to endeavour to produce a flexible material upon which pictures could be photographed so that a number of rapid exposures could be made by the one camera.

Various methods were tried. Paper soaked in oil, to make it transparent, gelatine and even celluloid. All were failures. Some inventors, with great patience and terrible wastage, made their own celluloid roll films, but so pre-occupied were they with the idea of the plate negative that they all made their films so that each exposure was about 4in. by 3in. instead of the present standard size of $1\frac{3}{8}$in. by $\frac{3}{4}$in. All were crude and practically unusable.

George Eastman, a New Yorker who did a great deal for photography, became interested in this problem and in 1885 invented the first effective roll film. A few more years of experiment and gradual improvement and it was placed on the market as a commercial proposition, and more or less as we know it to-day. And this event, indirectly, marked a great step forward of the movies.

II.

It was another Englishman, William Friese-Greene, of Bristol, however, who actually invented the first moving-picture camera and whose claim to such has now been confirmed, after a great deal of legal argument, by the United States law courts.

Comedy: Top comedian today is another Londoner, Bob Hope, who gets his laughs largely by means of the whip-lash wise-crack. Here he is as a crazy reporter, with Dorothy Lamour as his assistant, in "They Got Me Covered" (1943).

To Mr. Greene belongs the distinction of being the first man to photograph and show moving pictures that did *move*.

Friese-Greene, a professional photographer, took his first movies on strips of paper soaked in oil, but finding them of little use he later worked on celluloid and with the help of two kettles and a mangle made his own strips of raw film stock. With one of these strips in a camera he had already painfully evolved he stood at Hyde Park Corner one fine November day in 1889 and exposed his 20-foot length of film.

He rushed home and breathlessly printed it. Then, presumably, put it through his primitive projector. And there, sure enough, was Hyde Park Corner, with the buses and cabs jerking by and recognisable pedestrians hurrying along like automatons.

To see this film now would be amusing. It is almost impossible to realise how crude it was ; but at that time it was a miracle and the young inventor rushed out and dragged in the first passer-by to witness his triumph. It happened to be a policeman and his astonishment was even greater than his annoyance at being whisked off his beat by an apparently insane young man.

It is interesting to note that the film had both colour and sound in its earliest infancy, only to lose both for many years before it found them again in their present perfected state.

As early as 1888 Emile Reynaud, a Frenchman, was using paintings for his prexinoscope (a form of picture animation) and only later did he switch over to photographs ; while some time later than that a young man in America, Francis Jenkins, took a film of a girl dancing and had it painstakingly coloured picture by picture and so produced the first all-coloured movie.

It was Edison, who so often has been credited with the actual invention of the moving picture, who gave the film its first voice. He became interested in the film originally only because it seemed to him that it might create an added interest to his "talking machine," and when the celluloid film became practical he quickly evolved the Kinetoscope.

This was a machine whereby one person at a time could watch a 40-foot length of film passing through a series of rollers

Comedy : The Marx Brothers—Harpo, Graucho and Chico—introduced a new form of humour to the screen when they made " The Cocoanuts," in 1932. It started a vogue, for Crazy Comedy. Their films divided cinemagoers into two distinct camps, those who liked them and those who couldn't understand or appreciate their peculiar form of humour. But they went on making extremely successful movies until 1941, when, at the completion of " The Big Store," they decided to split up and each go his own—very musical—way. The screen is poorer for this decision. This picture is from " A Day at the Races " (1936)

behind a powerful magnifying glass. This machine was exhibited, and proved a great success, at the Chicago World's Fair.

In the meantime Edison's staff were not idle and it was they who achieved the first projection of a film on to a screen with synchronised sound. They made a film of Edison's chief assistant and then wedded it to a record of his voice saying "Good morning, Mr. Edison." This was planned as a surprise for the boss on his return from Chicago.

Both film and phonograph were still indescribably crude of course, bnt both were steadily progressing and this experiment proves that all those years ago the idea of combining sight and sound into one form of entertainment was there. It was not to be until many years later that sound was finally to be successfully wedded to sight, however.

III.

And here the story, which started in England, moves back here again. Robert Paul was a scientific instrument maker with offices in Hatton Garden. Until a couple of Greeks walked into his premises one day he had taken no interest at all in the movies, indeed it is doubtful if he knew anything at all about them. The Greeks had just come from America where they had seen, and been greatly impressed by the possibilities of Edison's Kinetoscope ; a model of which they had brought back with them.

They wanted Paul to make similar machines so that they could market them to fun-fair proprietors in this country. Paul thinking of the patent laws, refused. But the idea intrigued him and he took the trouble to go to the Patent Office to look up Edison's specifications. Greatly to his astonishment he discovered that they did not exist ; Edison had never taken the trouble to patent his invention in this country and so there was nothing to prevent anyone from copying it.

In view of these facts Paul reversed his decision and made a machine for the Greeks, and then some for himself. Soon he began to export them as well as sell them in this country. He became intensely interested in the movies, and devoted practically all his time to their improvement.

Comedy : W. C. Fields, of big nose and fruity voice, is one of the screen's great comedians, though for years now we have not seen him at his best. Writer and vaudeville performer, he brought to the screen his own inimitable form of " bumbling " humour and jumped to the top with it. Here he is with little Gloria Jean in the delightfully titled (in America) " Never Give a Sucker An Even Break " (1941).

Comedy : Top comedy team of Abbott and Costello occupy the place to-day that Laurel and Hardy had yesterday. Their methods are simple, a development of the old custard-pie-slinging technique, but none the less effective for that. This is a scene from " Rio Rita " (1942).

So far the films thrown upon the screen had been too dim and crude to have any practical entertainment value. Paul worked on this problem and evolved the " gate " (an essential part of the modern projector) which minimised the danger of fire and allowed him to use more lighting behind the film, and so throw an image quite a long distance without losing too much of its brightness.

And now to explain Paul's great step in the history of film projection it is necessary for the reader to understand some of the mechanics of the movie projector.

We do not, of course, see a *moving* picture at all on the screen ; what we do see is a series of still pictures, each one slightly different from the other, held on the screen for one-sixteenth of a second. As the human eye needs just double that time to observe a picture it means that before we have had time to take in one picture the next is being shown. The result of all this is that the eye is completely *deceived* into *believing* that it is seeing a *moving* picture. To the fact that the human eye can be so easily fooled the cinema film owes its value as entertainment.

Another thing : although it is difficult to realise it the screen is actually dark during one-third of any programme of movies. This is due to shutters in the projector situated between the film and the lens which revolve at a high speed and cut off the light between each picture shown, thus preventing flicker.

In Edison's Kinetoscope the films moved continuously, that is to say they only allowed each separate frame or picture to be viewed for a thousandth part of a second. If they were slowed down at all they became blurred.

Paul, realising that if the film could only be held for a fraction of a second it would make the film clearer and do away with this blurring, worked very hard at this problem, and, eventually, after a great deal of hard work and many experiments, he discovered the solution.

This solution was a little wheel in the projector cut in the shape of a Maltese cross. As it revolved a pinion fell into the cut-out portions of the wheel and so held the strip of film motionless for that fraction of a second that was so necessary. It was this tiny and, on the face of it, simple little gadget which made all the difference between good and bad film projection.

Comedy : And talking of custard pies . . . Marion Davies measures her man—a scene from "Show People."

Comedy : Laurel and Hardy were two of the few comedians whose silent technique survived the talkies, though they have never quite reached the standard they set by their early two-reelers. Laurel (real name Arthur Stanley Jefferson) was born at Ulverson and educated at Bishop Auckland ; he received his stage training in circus, vaudeville, musical comedy and drama. Oliver Hardy (that's his real name) was born in Atlanta.

At 3 a.m. on a cold February day in 1895 Paul threw a clear and bright image on to a seven-foot square screen some forty feet away from the projector. Paul and his staff went mad with joy. The policeman passing on duty heard the commotion and imagined that at the very least a murder was being committed, so he tore in with his truncheon at the " ready." Irritation turned to amazement when he was shown the film which, still jerky and flickering as it was, was such a tremendous advance on anything that had gone before.

IV.

Once more the story of the film changes background. In France the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumiere (it was the same Lumiere brothers who, in 1907, put on the market the first photographic colour plate, known as the autochrome plate) were working along the same lines as inventors in other parts of the world. On February 13th, 1895, they patented their first projection machine and just a month later they showed their first film (it was 50 feet long and bore the title " Lunch Hour at the Lumiere Factory ") in public.

In December, the movie as public entertainment, was born. On the 28th, in a cellar of the Grand Cafe in Paris, at the admission charge of 1 franc, the public were allowed to see a programme of ten films, each film being about 50 feet in length. The public's interest was instantaneous and startling. The first day's box-office receipts were 35 francs ; five weeks later more than 2,000 francs a day were being taken. Soon there were other, rival, establishments. Competition had started.

The first film studio was established by Edison at Fort Lee, New Jersey. Just about this time the Paul-Edison fight started.

Edison had come to hear that Paul was making Kinetoscope machines and selling them in large numbers. Regretting his carelessness in not taking out full patents he decided to see what could be done at this late hour and sent a couple of men over to England to discover how matters actually stood. Finding that they had no power to stop Paul making the machines these men advised Edison that the only thing he could do would be to stop Paul and his clients getting films ; Paul's machine using Edison's films of course.

Comedy : Harold Lloyd, one of the famous comedians of silent screen, started his career by a stage appearance at the age of 12, going on the films in 1913. His "Safety Last" and "Welcome Danger" are classics in their way. Here is a scene from one of his last films, one of his few talkies, "The Milky Way" (1936) with Helen Mack.

Cowboy Star : To-day cowboys must be versatile ; not only do they have to ride well, appear to shoot straight, but they must also be prepared to snatch up a guitar at any moment and burst into song. Most popular singing cowboy of 1944 is Roy Rogers, who comes from Cody in Wyoming and started his career as a radio singer.

Cowboy Star : Bill Hart, ace cowboy star of yesterday ; always he rode into trouble, smoothed it out with iron hand and grim, sad face, and then rode into the sunset, leaving The Girl in the arms of another man. A scene from "Tumbleweeds" (1926). (By courtesy of Paul Rotha, who supplied still from his collection.)

Their idea was quite a sound one and at the start it worked. But they had reckoned without the Englshman's initiative. Finding that the people he had sold his machines to were no longer able to get films for them he did the only possible thing, other than tamely submitting; he went into the film-making business himself. He opened his own film studios at New Southgate, Middlesex. And he did so well at it that for the next ten years or so he turned out some of the best films made, of the topical kind, and not only supplied them to British and Continental exhibitors but, the irony of it, to Americans as well.

Paul called his projector The Theatrograph and in February, 1896, (February seems to have been quite a month in the early history of the movies) gave one of the first public exhibitions of films in this country at the Royal Institute at Finsbury—now the Finsbury Technical Institute. His films included those of rough seas breaking on the shore and a shoe-black at work. Slightly earlier in the same month the Lumiere's had opened the Polytechnic in Regent Street with a similar programme of films.

Soon after his exhibition at the Institute Paul began to explore the possibilities of coloured films, and persuaded a painter of magic lantern slides to start on the tremendous task of painting a film by hand, picture by picture. The result was interesting but it was obvious that the method was far too slow to be of any practical use. Whether Paul had seen Jenkins' earlier efforts in the same direction is not recorded, but it is to be noted that both men used the identical laborious method to achieve the same end.

It was just about now that the first news-reel film made its appearance. In France the Lumiere brothers had sent an agent, M. Promio, travelling through Europe to exploit their inventions and had sent with him a camera and plenty of rolls of film. M. Promio, luckily, did not lack either imagination or initiative and he proceeded to take films of interesting events in the countries he visited: in Spain, Portugal, Germany and England, where he filmed the funeral of Queen Victoria.

For this latter great occasion Promio's ambition for good results, his appreciation of the importance of his task, and inventiveness stood him in good stead. To avoid the constant

Spectacle : In 1915 a young man called David Wark Griffith amazed the world with the most lavish and spectacular film that had ever flickered across the silent screen. " Intolerance," one of the greatest movies ever made, was shown in Russia as an example of perfect filmcraft for more than ten years. Here are stars Constance Talmage and Wilfred Paget.

Spectacle : French Abel Gance planned " Napoleon," the story of " The Little Corporal " to be one of the greatest films of all time, and even as it stands, shorn somewhat by lack of money, it marks one of most impressive uses of spectacle up to the time it was made, 1924, as this scene will give you an idea.

hold-ups made necessary by the re-loading of the camera he fixed up two cameras so that one could be shooting while the other was being re-loaded.

In England Paul had filmed the Derby and shown the result to a wildly enthusiastic audience the same night at the Alhambra ; this was on March 25th, 1896.

This picture was shown as a novelty turn in the variety bill and the original contract was for a fortnight. But the film stole the main thunder of the show and for the next 4½ years the Alhambra bill always included about a quarter-of-an-hour devoted to films.

Yes, the news-reel was born. It was to proceed the story film by only a very little time as Paul was already wistfully, thinking of—more, actually planning—the filming of H. G. Wells' *Time Machine.*

V.

By 1898 the films were attracting attention—in 1896 Mary Irwin's exhibition of osculation in " The Kiss " brought shrieks of protest from the ultra-puritanical and a demand for censorship—and being made in a number of countries : in England, France, Germany and Denmark, where a court photographer, Mr. P. Elfelt, carried out the daring experiment of filming a Royal Family Group.

The baby industry was growing and thriving, in spite of many teething troubles. These troubles included the series of law cases which started just now and dragged on for years, and the great Paris disaster of 1897.

Until this tragedy no real thought had been given to fire precautions at the showings of films, although it surely must have been realised how dangerous the highly inflammable celluloid film was. Anyway, when the projector caught fire in the Bazar de la Charité there was nothing whatsoever to stop it. In a matter of seconds the whole place was a roaring inferno from which escape was almost impossible.

Of the 180 people who were burnt to death in this fire more than 130 were of the French nobility or people holding high positions.

Spectacle : In 1925 Vitagraph made one of the finest sea spectacle movies in an adaptation of Rafael Sabatini's adventure book, " Captain Blood." J. Warren Kerrigan had the title role, with Jean Paige as Arabella Bishop.

Spectacle : 1929 saw M.G.M.'s spectacle of the Frozen North, " The Trail of '98," directed by Clarence Brown and, with a cast that included Dolores del Rio, Ralph Forbes, Karl Dane and Harvy Carey.

The outcry that followed can be well imagined. The newspapers cried out at the danger that the public ran in going to see the movies and people became suspicious and nervous of them. For some considerable time this suspicion lingered and it took great efforts on the part of the movie showmen to overcome it.

Meanwhile films were becoming longer and getting more ambitious. In 1903 Edison produced *The Great Train Robbery*, a film which marked another great step forward and directly laid the foundations of the commercial movie as we know it to-day. It was not, to be strictly accurate, the first *story* movie, as is so often claimed for it, but it was the first movie that had all the elements of the modern film in it.

Five years before this, in 1898, seeing the success of a film of the Oberammergau Passion Play which the American representative of the Lumiere brothers had sent a cameraman to Germany especially to film, the manager of the Eden Musse in New York made a super film—it was actually of the then unheard-of length of 2,000 feet—on the same subject on the roof of some offices. The fake, it was entitled *The Passion Play*, was a terrific success, even when the secret of its making leaked out.

The Great Train Robbery had a *complete* story, it was of the considerable length of 800 feet, it was based on action, and it even finished with a close-up.

This film, marking as it did the turning point in the movies as entertainment, is remarkable for many things. It cost about £109 to make and for many years earned as much as twice that in a week. It had no stars, credits were never given to anyone in those days, but the principal actor in the film, G. M. Anderson (or Broncho Billy as he was to become) was later to find fame as one of the most popular cowboy heroes of the screen, and, with a partner, G. K. Spoon, become founder of the famous Essanay Company which employed such famous stars as Chaplin, Wallace Beery and Gloria Swanson.

As a guide to the status the moviemakers of those days enjoyed it is enteresting to note that after a hard day's work on *The Great Train Robbery* the entire cast and technical crew were locked-up and forced to spend the night in jail on a charge of desecrating the Sabbath.

Spectacle : Greatest spectacle of the modern screen is that 3½-hour, superbly Technicolored colossus, M.G.M.'s " Gone With the Wind," which has already taken more than £8,000,000 at the box-office and is still playing both in America and England. This is the scene in the Town Square at Atlanta, which has been turned into an emergency hospital during the American Civil War.

Spectacle : Spectacle of a different kind was " East is West," made by Associated First National and starring Constance Talmadge.

Erratum : The captions on this page are transposed.

No history of the early film would be complete without a mention of another Frenchman, M. Melies, who as early as 1900 was working on single-reel super films. Melies loved fantasy and his films showed a high degree of imagination. His *Cinderella* and *Red Riding Hood* were followed by the even more ambitious trick films *A Trip to the Moon, Under the Sea* and *Merry Frolics of Satan*. Let others strive for reality, said Melies, and I will persevere to show the attraction of fantasy. Melies went on boldly to explore every possibility of illusion on the screen. He loved magic, and he was the first man to see the tremendous scope there was for this kind of thing in the film.

To Melies goes the credit for the discovery of most of the more simple film tricks we know to-day ; slow-motion and quick-motion amongst them.

It is said that Melies discovered trick photography by an accident, through his camera breaking down one day. As a result of this a bus, which had been passing when the film stopped, turned suddenly into a hearse, the vehicle that was passing when the camera started to run again.

Most moviegoers would see little but laughable crudity in Melies' films to-day, but they were ingenius and, working as he did within strict limits imposed by the period, he achieved really great things.

VI.

Before I end this chapter it is interesting to recall what happened to some of these men who made the movies possible ; men who were responsible for the start of the world's most popular form of entertainment.

Friese-Greene, to whom the movies owe so much, died in poverty. In 1916 an appeal to the film industry on his behalf was made. It realised just over a hundred pounds. In 1921 he went to a meeting which had been called at the Connaught Rooms to decide the future of the British film industry, which was then in a terrible way. He rose from his seat in the body of the hall and made an eloquent plea for the continuation of film-making in this country, and it is allowable to say that this

The great lovers : Ramon Novarro, son of a Dr. Samaniegos, Mexican dentist (his real name) and one of twelve children. Was singing in a Hollywood restaurant when seen by dance director Marion Morgan, who offered him a place in her Vaudeville act. First film was " Prisoner of Zenda " in 1923. This is a scene from one of his later films, " The Forbidden Hour."

The great lovers : The much-married, tragic John Gilbert, who, favourite screen hero for so long, failed with the coming of talkies and had nearly made a come-back after a very hard struggle when he died. A scene from " The Cossacks " with Renee Adoree (1930).

speech from the man who felt so deeply on the subject helped to sway the audience over to passing a vote that this should be done.

Friese-Greene sat down. Presently his neighbour leaned forward to say something to him and discovered to his horror that Greene was dead. It was found that he had 1s. 10d. on him, all the money he had in the world.

George Melies was a little more fortunate. In 1928 he was discovered selling sweets and toys on a stall in a market ; was feted, wined and dined, and then given a place in a Home for the aged. He died in January, 1938.

Paul returned eventually to his original business of instrument making.

George Eastman, inventor of the roll film and many other photographic accessories, made a huge fortune and became head of the enormous firm of Eastman Kodak Ltd. His fortune can best be imagined when it is stated that he gave away about £15,000,000 to charity. Yet Eastman apparently grew tired of life, for he shot himself on March 14th, 1932.

The great lovers : Rudolph Valentino, greatest of all lovers of the silent screen. One-time scullery boy from Genoa (his real name was Rudolph Alfonso Raffaele Pierre Filiberti Guiglielmi di Valentino d'Antongueila), he appeared in his first film in 1919 ("The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse") and soon had millions of women fans swooning around him. This is a scene from "The Conquering Power," in which he appeared with Alice Terry, Eric Mayne, Mark Fenton and Edward Connelly (1922).

The great lovers : One of the most popular romantic teams ever to appear on the screen were the late John Gilbert and the mysterious Greta Garbo. One of their last and greatest pictures together was M.G.M.'s "Queen Christina," made and shown in 1933.

PART 2.

THE SILENT DAYS—1900-1914.

I.

Until about 1900 the film had been used merely as an extra novelty turn on the Music Hall bill. Its status as entertainment in its own right was very low and showmen were generally doubtful about it having any future.

As a direct result of this part of its history the film reel of to-day is always 1,000 feet in length. This came about in the following manner. The time allowed for each vaudeville act then was about fifteen minutes, and as the movies were looked upon as just another turn they too were allowed fifteen minutes. This led to the operator mounting all his films upon one reel in order to give his programme without a break. And to this day the film reel remains at 1,000 feet, and a film is referred to as an eight or nine-reeler according to its length in thousands of feet. If you want to work how long any particular film will take to show find out its length in feet and then divide by 90, which is about the length of feet of film that passes through the projector every minute.

About this date (1900) the first actual cinema came into existence, although it was not so called then, nor indeed did it have much in common with the palatial edifices that to-day go under the title of super-cinema.

As early as 1896 there was a converted shop being used as a cinema in Kingston by a Mr. Lane. The venture was not a success however, as the passing public would not be lured in to see the "moving pictures," and Mr. Lane was obliged to close down.

In the following year the same kind of thing happened in Islington. A 10-minute programme of films was shown and a 2d. charge was made.

Various other places began to open during the next few years, with varying success. In 1902 a Thomas J. Talley opened a theatre for the "showing of films only" in Los Angeles and

The great lovers : To-day it is handsome, tough Clark Gable who sets the hearts of feminine fans beating quickly. The modern screen hero is very different from the type below, in approach, method and embrace—as you can see for yourself. With Gable is the late Jean Harlow.

The great lovers : Charles Boyer, with the sad eyes and the fascinating accent, has always been a popular film lover. One of his finest romantic performances was with the exquisite Danielle Darrieux in the French film "Mayerling."

The great lovers : Finally, just a glimpse of the way they made love in the days of the silent screen. William Haines daringly kisses one golden lock of Marion Davies's hair while Miss Davies seems likely to swoon in ecstasy at any moment. A scene from "Show People."

so started the Nickelodeons. In America, as over here, the first cinemas were all converted shops.

In the same year, Charles Urban, a Londoner, took over the projection of films at the Alhambra. It was he who secured a fresh advance for the movies as an entertainment, without the aid of other forms of amusement, and helped to place them on a slightly higher level than before with his daily 2-hour matinees of films. Tea and biscuits were included in the admission price (a custom which persisted until quite recently in some halls) and the programme consisted of scientific, geographical and educational films mixed with a few in lighter vein. Note those three words, scientific, geographical and educational, they marked a new departure for the films.

Urban, in fact, set out to prove that the movies were as fitting entertainment for the more refined and genteel public as they were for the less particular " masses."

In the main, however, films shown in this country were still confined to side-shows at fairs. Here some of the films exhibited were in an atrocious condition. All projectors were still worked by hand, of course, and in order to get one audience out and the next audience in the films were often rushed through at a fearsome pace—turning everything into shrieking farce. Breaks in the film were frequent, repairs badly done, scratches were constant. It was not entirely unknown for the operator to shake the projector to pieces by his rough treatment of it over a long period.

Incidentally this " rushing " of films persisted in isolated cases so long as projectors were turned by hand ; and even after. It was a charge, justly and unjustly, levelled at cinemas on Saturday nights, and I remember being present on more than one occasion when the audience began to shout as the figures on the screen started to dash along at an incredible rate.

In America the Nickelodeons (so named because Tally and his earliest competitors charged a nickel for admission) and in England the Electric Theatres became extremely popular and began to open in all the big towns.

One of the results of this popularity was that the demand for films began to exceed the supply.

Anything less like a theatre, or Odeon, than these places of entertainment would be difficult to imagine. They were all

Behind the screen : The late Leslie Howard, one of the greatest figures of the British Film Industry during the past few years, explaining a scene from the last film he directed, " The Gentle Sex " (1942).

Behind the screen : Sir Alexander Korda, with telephone, directs a scene from " Wedding Rehearsal," the first of The London Films Productions to be made at Denham. On the left is Assistant Director Stanley Irving (1931).

converted shops ; the seats were usually hard wooden chairs, sometimes even wooden boxes ; and there were no set times for shows. When the " manager " considered his " theatre " was full enough he ran through his films.

One point about these earliest cinemas was that, following the accepted practice of theatre and music hall, the more expensive seats were those nearest the front while the cheapest were at the back, a direct reversal of modern practice.

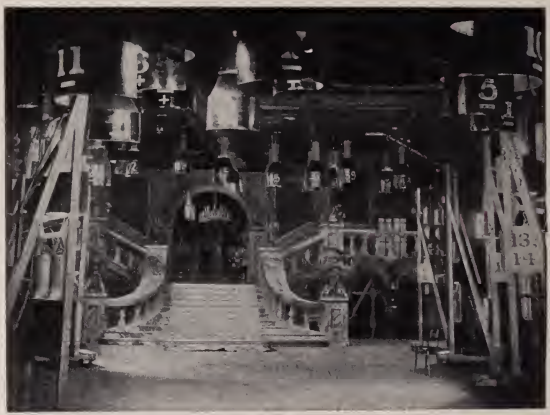
Some of the shops were too long for the projector to throw a convenient size picture on the screen and in this case the screen (placed in the middle of the shop) was kept wet (and so made transparent) and the audience sat each side of it. The main snag about this method was that when sub-titles were introduced those behind the screen (the 1d. and 2d. seats) saw them backwards.

The other day I was talking to a gentleman who vividly remembers these earliest shows. He told me that the audience took their films far more seriously, and certainly more vocally, than they do now even in the toughest places. Advice to the hero and heroine, curses for the villian, and cheers at the escape of the former from the clutches of the latter helped to make a babel of sound.

Incredible though it may sound to the modern cinemagoer who has chanced to see these earliest movies they often brought the audience to tears.

Meanwhile three exhibiting firms had risen which got a good name for the general excellence of their cinemas and programmes, even when, as in most cases, the former were tents at fairs. These were West (Army and Navy), Walter Jeff (New Century) and Hale (Hale's Tours).

Hale's Tours were an interesting experiment. Hale himself was a Kansas City fireman with ambition. He saw the movies as his opportunity. He rigged up a hall in imitation of the interior of an American railroad coach, arranged it so that it could be gently rocked with the motion of a speeding train, had a " conductor " to collect the " fares " and give a running commentary on the films, and had all the noises produced of a train at rest and in motion.



Behind the screen : A set used on one of the early British films, " Rupert of Hentzau " (1913). It gives a good idea of how the early movie-makers were handicapped.

Behind the screen : How they made films in the old British studios ; shooting a scene from " Trilby " (1913). In the chair is Viva Birkett as Trilby (she was Mrs. Phillip Merivale and died some years ago), Sir Herbert Tree as Svengali, Ion Swinley as Little Billee, and Phillip Merivale as Taffy (in shirt and trousers).

The lights were lowered, a whistle was blown, there was the hiss of steam and the film started. Hale's films were taken from the front of an engine and so the illusion was perfect. The scenery, the rails and sleepers, signals, crossings, bridges and stations rushed towards you and disappeared.

All the time the "noises off" were continued and the conductor explained the interesting points about the passing scenery.

The Tours were a great success. After opening cinemas in nearly all the big cities of America, Hale started a chain of them over here, including one in Oxford Street and one at Hammersmith Broadway; the former was soon taking more than a thousand sixpences a day.

In 1905 a Mr. John P. Harris opened his "continuous show motion picture theatre" in Pittsburgh and in July two years later the first cinematograph theatre in London was opened, the Balham Empire.

For the first time here was a comfortable theatre showing films and films only. Two shows were given each evening with afternoon matinees on Thursdays and Saturdays. There was even music supplied by a hidden orchestra. The programme lasted two hours and with this opening it can be said that the modern cinema was actually born.

II.

As early as 1905 there began to enter the film business the men who were largely to control its future destiny; men who starting by owning one shop-cinema gradually became owners, and co-owners, of chains of houses mounting into many hundreds. They began to make their own movies and founded the firms which to-day annually turn out hundreds of super-films each costing many thousands of pounds apiece, and have so largely helped to build an industry which now has a world capital investment of something in the neighbourhood of £550,000,000.

Amongst the first of these men was Adolph Zukor. Zukor was born in Reise in Hungary in 1873. At the age of 16 he emigrated to America. By day he swept the floor in a fur stores,

Behind the Screen : Gracie Fields making her first film, directed by Maurice Elvey, " Salley in Our Alley " (1931). In those days instead of building a park in the studio they went out into the park to shoot the scenes.

Behind the Screen : The late Conrad Veidt talks to director Maurice Elvey between shots of that great British film of " The Wandering Jew " (1934).

by night he studied. He got on ; he invented a fur clasp which brought him a considerable sum of money ; he ran fur shops in Chicago and New York which paid well. In 1903 Zukor was persuaded by his friend Marcus Loew (whom I have heard a friend say, " He was the most charming little man I ever met ") to join with him in running a penny arcade. The venture was a success and in 1912 he formed Famous Players Film Company, the first two productions of which, both on a gigantic scale for those days, were Sarah Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth*, and James A. Hackett in *Prisoner of Zenda*. In 1916 Zukor's company joined the Jesse Lasky's Feature Play Company and later absorbed the Paramount Picture Corporation. To-day Zukor is at the head of the gigantic Paramount Pictures, which makes its own films and shows them in a chain of its own cinemas, and has a total income in excess of a hundred million dollars a year.

Jesse J. Lasky (mentioned above) is another good subject for a success story. Born in America, in San Francisco, he was the first man to go from the West Coast to Alaska in the earliest gold rush and one of the first to reach Nome. Previous to this he had been a newspaper reporter and afterwards he became the leader of the Royal Hawaiian Band of Honolulu.

This led to an interest vaudeville and, inevitably, the new offshoot from vaudeville, the movies ; which Lasky soon became confident would eventually climb into one of the major forms of public entertainment.

Lasky's faith was justified and in 1914 he formed, with Samuel Goldwyn and Cecil B. de Mille (other great names in the cinema) the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company—which was later to join the Famous Players Film Company as already mentioned.

Incidentally Samuel Goldwyn, who to-day directs the fortunes of the great firm of United Artists, started his career as an apprentice in a glove shop. Cecil B. de Mille, however had show business in the blood, as both his parents were playwrights. He himself followed a college education by a course of study at the Academy of Dramatic Art in New York.

The Warner Brothers, cashing in on the craze for bicycles that swept America at the tail-end of the nineteenth century,

Glamour : Clara Bow, Brooklyn born red-head, one-time typist and wife of cowboy star Rex Bell, who was known as the " It Girl " and achieved great notoriety in a short time.

Glamour : Theda Bara, who, believe it or not, represented the last word in screen sex appeal way back in 1918. Probably the most exotic thing about Miss Bara (said to be daughter of a French artist and an Arab mistress but actually just the girl from around the corner) was her amazing publicity.

Glamour : To-day it is slim, blonde and lovely Lana Turner who represents all things to all men on the screen. On the left is a portrait of Miss Turner when she first arrived at the M.G.M. studios (1937), and on the right how she is to-day.

opened a shop in Youngstown, Ohio, in 1900. It was Harry, of the three brothers, who first saw the possibilities of the motion picture, and it was under his leadership that they closed their bicycles store, and, in 1903, opened their first picture theatre (shop) in Newcastle, Pennsylvania. It was called The Castle. Jack Warner used to sing at these shows, while Albert collected the money. Jack is now in charge of production at the vast Warner Bros. studios in California, while Albert is the Treasurer of the concern.

And so we can go on with this kind of thing : Carl Laemmle (" Granddaddy Carl " as he is now known in the film industry) came from Germany to New York in 1884 at the age of seventeen. His first job was in a chemist shop, his second as a junior assistant in a Chicago department store. Then he went as a farm hand to South Dakota, later to return to Chicago and become bookkeeper for a wholesale jeweller.

After further situations connected with bookkeeping he became manager of a second-hand clothes store. In 1906 he went to Chicago with the idea of forming a chain of 5 and 10 cent. stores and become interested in the movies instead.

His first cinema was " The White Front " (it was a converted shop of course) on Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago. Soon he had a second theatre and it was only a matter of time before he went into the renting and production branches of the business. Carl Laemmle became head of Universal Pictures and produced that all-time classic of the screen *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Incidentally Laemmle has had the honour of having his biography written by our own John Drinkwater.

It is rather strange to think that it was these men, of such varying interest and nationality, who entered the film business at its earliest infancy and brought it to its present commercially successful state.

The Cartoon : Only man who has ever appeared likely to be a serious rival to the great Walt Disney is Max Fleischer, whose "Gulliver's Travels" and "Mr. Bug Goes to Town" (shown here), are the only two feature-length cartoons ever to be made outside the Disney studios.

The Cartoon : Least commercial, but probably the most interesting, of all the many superb films to make up the large Disney output was his "Fantasia," an experiment in sound and music. Fantastic, futuristic in parts, it opened up new possibilities for the so-called film cartoon (1942).

III.

And now to turn to another great man of the cinema.

As 1903 marked a great step forward for the movies with the showing of *The Great Train Robbery* so 1908 was another red-letter year for the movies. It was the year that David Wark Griffith entered the film business.

Griffith was born at Crestwood, Kentucky, in 1875 and was the son of "Roaring Jake" of American civil war fame. He was educated at Kentucky University and his first job was that of a reporter on his brother's newspaper. It was here, while writing local theatre notes, that he developed a passion for the stage; an interest that led him eventually to try his own fortunes on the boards.

While working every night in repertory with a company in Louisville he also ran the daytime jobs of liftman in a large stores, agent for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and, once, even became ore-shoveller in a foundry.

Later he did better on the stage and, though it has been said he was "no great shakes" as an actor, went on tours with several groups of players.

Griffith entered the movie business when he was 27, in 1908. The previous year had not been a particularly happy one for D.W.G., though it had started well enough when play producer James Hackett unexpectedly bought Griffith's *A Fool and a Girl* and paid him a thousand dollars for it. Hackett chose this play for Fanny Ward's return to the American stage, but in spite of the popularity of this actress the production proved a dismal failure. Forced once more to earn some money (this was more than ever necessary now that he had married, the previous year, a young actress by the name of Linda Johnson) Griffith turned—almost in desperation, we can imagine—to the cinema. Armed with one of the several scenarios he had written, it was *La Tosca*, a version of the famous opera, he went along to the Edison studios. But his offer was politely declined. Already thinking along lines far in advance of his time Griffith conceived his scenarios on the grand scale, for that day and age, and the Edison people nearly fainted when they saw the number of scenes

Film Hero : Henry B. Walthall, who found fame after one picture, Griffith's star-making " Birth of a Nation," was the popular movie hero in 1914 and for some years later.

Film Hero : To-day it is tough, off-hand heroes like Humphrey Bogart who pay their way at the box-office. It is significant that Bogart started out as a villain but made the change-over to hero on the demand of the moviegoers. " High Sierra " (1941)

Film Hero : Leslie Howard, gentle, extremely English, yet with a certain grim determination underneath, represented another popular type of hero. This is a scene from " Pimpernel Smith " (1940), which he also directed and produced.

he wanted and the amount of money that would be needed to make his film.

Griffith, however disappointed he may have been at his first failure to break into pictures, decided to get into the industry by another method. He obtained several acting parts in 1-reelers.

Edwin S. Porter, the man who made *The Great Train Robbery*, was one of the first men to give him a part and soon Griffith appeared in several films, *Ostler Joe*, *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, and *The Eagle's Nest*—in which he earned 20 dollars for " fighting " with a stuffed eagle.

In the meantime Griffith went steadily on writing scenarios in his spare time, and eventually he began to sell them. He wrote more than 400 in all and sold some for as low as £1. The usual price for a film scenario in those days was £3 and the players drew about £1 a day for their services.

Later he became assistant director to H. N. Marvin (head of Biograph) and after this it was not long before he made his first film, *The Adventure of Dolly*. This was 700 feet in length, and when it was shown people began to realise that here was a young man with novel and interesting ideas.

Griffiith, with G. W. Bitzer as his cameraman, soon began to improve the Biograph fortunes. He often worked 14 hours a day, turning out one 12-minute and one 6-minute film every week. He worked at this pressure without taking a single holiday, for a number of years.

It has been claimed, and disputed, that Griffith invented many of the technical essentials of the modern film, such as the flash-back, the fade-in and the fade-out, all features in a film which, although to-day an accepted part of the technique of movie-making, were then unknown.

Griffith has himself said he was the first movie-maker to think out and use these improvements and his claim is supported by many of the people of the industry at that time.

Griffith was certainly the first director to realise the potentialities of the film as an entirely new form of entertainment; as a new form of art completely divorced from that of the stage. He realised that to tell a story by means of the silent film he would need a wholly different technique from that of the vocal

Film Hero : The late athletic Douglas Fairbanks practically took the screen by storm, literally leaping his way right to the top of the tree. In his day there was no star to touch him for popularity and it was a popularity and a love that lasted long after he had passed his zenith as an actor, until he died in fact.

Film Hero : Smooth, silent, Alan Ladd shot his way to popularity, strangely enough, as the killer in "This Gun for Hire." Here he is in another tough role, in the gangster film "The Glass Key"—with Veronica Lake (of the peekaboo hair style) and Brian Donelvy (1942).

stage. He would have to present his stories entirely visually if he was to hold the attention of an audience for any length of time.

At this time his ideas were revolutionary. As with all new ideas they were met with suspicion, considerable criticism and even, in some cases, with open revolt.

When Griffith wanted the cameraman to film the first close-up (seen in *For the Love of Gold*) the cameraman was so disgusted at the crazy scheme that he put on his hat and walked out. Incidentally this close-up came up against more opposition when the finished film was shown in some of the American hick-town cinemas.

The uneducated and ignorant audiences of the always conservative middle-west objected most heartily to this sudden departure from movie tradition and stamped their feet and howled in unison, " Show us their feet ! Show us their feet ! "

The flash-back, Griffith's next innovation, met opposition from his own bosses. He put down his idea (and how he wanted it carried out) in writing in the shooting script and when the producers noticed it they objected that it wasn't practical. They were afraid this experimenting young man of theirs' would drive the people out of the cinemas with his apparently crazy new notions.

But Griffith, supremely confident in himself (rightly so as it was to prove) went ahead calmly and took no notice of any opposition. He brought other new ideas to the screen ; although himself an actor he wasn't at all satisfied that stage actors and actresses, with their specialised and exaggerated technique for appealing to the back of the far-away rear row of the gallery as well as the front row of the stalls, were the ideal people for the movies. He saw at once that as the movie camera was always nearer the players than even the front staller's a more intimate style of acting was needed (although to see this so-called intimate style to-day makes it hard to realise how much more subtle it was than the acting style of the general stage players of that time) and so started to depend more on young people which he could mould to his needs rather than players settled beyond any hope of modification in the way of the theatre. Another explanation is that Griffith's close-ups were

so hard on the faces of his players that he had to get youngsters on whose cheeks time had as yet had no opportunity to lay a single line.

Anyway, it was in this way that Griffith brought to the screen, and gave her her great chance, the first real star of the screen, Mary Pickford (of whom more later).

As I have already said, Griffith always had big ideas, ideas far in advance of his time. He wanted to make bigger and better movies. It was he who made the first two-reeler, an achievement which merely enraged his bosses, who finally compromised; divided the film and sold it as a 2-part serial. (As a side-note here, it is interesting to mention that many of the ideas for earlier Griffith films were supplied by Mary Pickford, Mack Sennett and many other people in his company who were later to become famous).

Again this unpleasantness didn't stop Griffith from calmly going ahead and doing what he thought was right. After this rumpus he went on to make the first four-reel picture, and then a five-reeler; although this latter caused such consternation and trouble that he was eventually constrained to chop up his creation into five parts and sell it as separate films.

Griffith's grand total of films goes well over the 400 mark of which the most outstanding were *Birth of a Nation* (made in 1914) and *Intolerance* (made two years later).

The Birth of a Nation is as much a milestone in the progress of the movies as was *The Great Train Robbery*. It cost £20,000 to make (to-day a very small sum for a picture) and brought in about £750,000. It was made from a novel called *The Clansmen* and was about post-civil-war reconstruction in the South of the U.S. To make it Griffiths left Biograph, who were now rather scared of his big ideas, and threw his lot in with Harry Aitken, forming the Mutual Film Company.

Griffith worked methodically, only he being aware of the scope and daring of his plans, and soon the money budgeted to finance the film dwindled and was gone. Mutual Films would vote no further cash and it was only through the confidence in Griffith by the president of the company, who made a private loan of £5,000, that the film was eventually finished. It was then 12 reels in length and at one time a plan was considered

whereby once again Griffith's work was to be mercilessly chopped up and rented as a serial in 12 parts. But luckily for posterity that plan was shelved and in March, 1915, the film had its sensational premiere in New York. *The Birth of a Nation* marked the beginning of a new era ; suddenly the newspapers started talking about the movies ; almost overnight the film had become important and the Cinderella of the entertainment industry ceased to be joked about and became a force in the world.

Ten years later *Birth of a Nation* was still running and breaking records, and to-day it stands sixth on the list of all-time film money-makers.

Apart from this great triumph Griffith created many stars whose fame (even apart from Mary Pickford) persists and whose names to-day are household words. *Birth of a Nation* made stars of Mae Marsh and Lilian Gish. Other Griffith films brought fame to Dorothy Gish, Owen Moore, Henry Walthall, Alice Joyce, Lionel Barrymore, Jack Pickford, Mabel Normand, Harry Carey, Mack Sennett, Blanche Sweet and Constance Talmadge, who made her name in *Intolerance*.

As a footnote to Griffith, who ranks with Chaplin and Walt Disney in that short and select list of the few great men of the screen, I should like to quote the words of the man who to-day is considered to be one of the world's finest directors, the man who made *The Man Who Talked Too Much*, and, more recently, *Rebecca*, our own Alfred Hitchcock :

" Remember David Wark Griffith," he said, " Every time you go to the cinema you enjoy in some indirect but plainly traceable form, the fruits of his labours ; to us who are endeavouring to explore new territories and to carry on his torch, he is the honoured Head of our profession."

IV.

Before we trace the history of the movies any further we must consider for a few moments something of the great battle that raged over a considerable period between the " Trust " and the " Independents " and had such a great effect on the development of the industry.

Great Actress : Constance Talmadge, sister of Norma, was another of the great names of the silent screen. Brooklyn born, she soared to popularity after her debut in Griffith's colossal "Intolerance."

Great Actress : Another picture of Pauline Frederick, who made her only British film as late as 1927. It was titled "Mumsie" and was directed by Herbert Wilcox.

Great Actress : First Lady of the Talking Screen is Greta Garbo, who came to Hollywood from Stockholm and astonished the film colony by announcing she preferred to be alone. The colony was even more astonished when it realised she meant what she said. This is a scene from M.G.M.'s Russian comedy "Ninotchka" (1939).

Edison had been constantly engaged in patent fights previous to 1908, and it was not until that year that Peace was declared. But this Peace, instead of being the end of hostilities was really only the beginning of a greater battle.

With Edison out of the fight the ten biggest producers in America formed themselves into The Motion Picture Patents Company, and promptly began to act like dictators.

By now, renting films out to exhibitors (in 1909 there were 9,000 cinemas in the United States alone) was a big business and these producers planned to dominate the market completely. Their high-handed behaviour annoyed many small exhibitors, however, and they turned to any independent renter who was able to supply them with suitable movies.

A group of about fifty of these grew up, and under the leadership of Carl Laemmle formed themselves into the Independent Motion Picture Company.

In an effort to destroy them the Trust filed thousands of suits against them. But somehow they carried on. The Trust won their fights in court but they lost too much time by this method. They became desperate ; they knew these independents were dodging the patent right by such tricks as buying foreign cameras and inserting patented American mechanism in them ; so they sent out hired thugs to break into the independents' studios and smash their cameras.

This led to pitched battles. The small producers migrated to the outskirts of New York or Chicago, but they were followed and the fights went on.

Studio guards, who were always on duty and ready to fight, were organised ; " burglars " broke in at night. Violent fights and struggles between the warring factions occurred every day. And yet somehow these small Independent producers managed to keep churning out films, indeed they had to, it was that or go bust.

One of the great stories of this fight took place in 1910. Mary Pickford was persuaded by Carl Laemmle to leave the Trust and make a film for him. Immediately the Trust sent every available man after Laemmle, but he, guessing what would happen, had already dashed off to Cuba with Mary and director Thomas Ince.

After them tore the agents of the Trust, laden with warrants and summonses, and taking with them a very annoyed Mrs. Smith (mother of Mary, whose real name this is). But for once the Trust was defeated, as American law didn't mean a thing in Cuba and while the Trust were deciding what to do about it Laemmle went ahead and made the film.

But for all these isolated victories the Independents were steadily losing ground to the more powerful Trust, until they began their trek to the West.

The reason why Hollywood, Los Angeles, is to-day the centre of the American film industry is interesting. The Independents, fleeing from the constant unwelcome attentions of the employees of the Trust, settled there, because, apart from the fact that it was one of the sunniest spots of sunny California—the sun was still the main lighting used for the making of films—it was also only a few miles away from the Mexican border. This meant that if a " Truster " showed up it was easy for the company concerned to pack up their bags and be over the border and out of the jurisdiction of American law in a very short space of time.

The official history of Hollywood (*Los Angeles, A History with Side-Shows*) makes interesting reading. Originally a Mr. M. Henderson Wilcox—one-time cobbler and preacher against the evils of drink—came from Michigan and settled in the then entirely undeveloped Los Angeles. He bought 160 acres of apricot and fig orchard, cleared it, and put it up for sale in lots.

Meanwhile his wife had gone East and there saw an Estate called Hollywood. She brought back the name with her. In any case there were some Californian hollies on the estate, but just to make the place really worthy of its title Henderson sent to England for some old English holly trees.

In due course they arrived ; and died. So did Henderson. Only Mrs. Wilcox survived.

By 1907 the first film had been made at Los Angeles and in the following year a movie man with the amusing name of Boggs had been shot dead by a Japanese gardener because of the constant loud noises made by a company filming a Western on a nearby lot.

The people of Hollywood tried hard, but in vain, to eject these common "Movies" (as they called the people who made the films). Finally they had to admit defeat and for the next few years the worthy citizens tried to pretend that the "Movies" were invisible.

As an indication as to what Hollywood thought of its films in those days it is interesting to read that this community was one of the last of its size to erect a cinema for its amusement.

To-day of a population of about 180,000 nearly 162,000 are in one way or another connected with the motion picture industry and dependent on it for their daily bread—and cake.

V.

In 1910 (the year that Griffith began to make films in Los Angeles) Tom Mix, a Texan, was persuaded to leave his cowboy job in Oklahama and make films. He was an instant success, such a success that it goaded Broncho Billy, who had been until then the screen's most popular cowboy, into forming a new company, with the object of making Westerns in Colorado with authentic backgrounds.

Here was the beginning of the true outdoor Western as we know it, and still enjoy it to-day, and which has always been one of the most consistently popular of all types of movies.

This same year of 1910 also saw the beginning of Pathe Weekly, the first weekly news reel.

In 1912 the foundations of the great series of slapstick comedies were laid with the building of the Keystone Studio by Mack Sennett.

Mack Sennett introduced to the screen something new; strange and laughable figures threw custard pies at each other, kicked each other's ankles, defied the law of man and nature for the sake of laughs. And they got those laughs. To this day the Keystone Comedies, with their hilarious chases, their grotesque figures, remain some of the most uproariously funny movies ever screened.

Sennett brought to the screen his Keystone Cops, policemen who suffered every possible indignity, and, as a complete contrast, The Bathing Belles, a group of lovely ladies in bathing costumes

The Western : A scene from one of the early Western films. Untitled and undated, but about 1918.

The Western : Up-to-date, modern Western. Wallace Beery, with scowl and guns a-ready, in the title role in M.G.M.'s "Bad Man of Brimstone" (1938).

who supplied the sex appeal—yes, Mack Sennett understood the value of that since much over-used word.

It was in these Mack Sennett comedies that many famous stars got their first chance. Mack Swain, Mabel Normand, Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, Ben Turpin, Gloria Swanson, Edgar Kennedy and—most important of all—Charles Spencer Chaplin.

Of Chaplin so much has been written and so much is known by even the casual filmgoer that it would be a waste of valuable space in such a condensed book as this is to give more than a few details. He was born in London in 1889 and entered upon a stage career at an early age (he was one of the juveniles in a Troupe known as The Six Lancashire Lads). Later he became one of Fred Karno's famous Mumming Birds and it was here that he developed the art of clowning to the highest pitch of perfection.

He entered pictures in 1913 in a Mack Sennett comedy, lured to the studios—rather unwillingly—from the Broadway stage at the princely salary of £30 a week. His first film was titled *The Kid Suto Races*, and his name was not even mentioned on the billing. He made a number of shorts, in which he rapidly leapt to fame, and then made his first feature length film (with the late Marie Dressler) *Tilly's Punctured Romance*.

Charlie made about 40 films for the Sennett Company—many of them with the ill-fated Mabel Normand (she rose to great heights of popularity but later died of an overdose of drugs in miserable circumstances)—and his rise to world-wide popularity was wonderful. Within a year of him signing that contract for Keystone at £30 a week he had signed a new contract with Essanay at £250 a week; yet another year, and he signed another contract for £2,000 a week with a £30,000 bonus.

A story is told of Chaplin which shows something of his nature. During the negotiations prior to his signing with the Essanay company he was at one time offered a thousand dollars a week. Chaplin promptly demanded a thousand and seventy-five. Puzzled at this rather strange request the firm asked him why he was so definite about the extra seventy-five. Charlie replied that it was to live on; he had planned to live on the seventy-five a week and keep the thousand with the idea that by saving it now he would be free from any monetary worries in

the future. He had little doubt that he would never have his contract renewed.

This sudden rise to the big-time indirectly brought Mary Pickford into the big money.

Mary Pickford (real name Smith as I have already noted) was born in Toronto, in Canada, on April 8th, 1893, and she entered the movies by signing a contract with W. D. Griffith in 1909. Her first film was *Her First Biscuits*, a six-minute comedy.

At first her name was not known—the star system was yet to be born—but her performance in *The Lonely Villa* and *The Violin Maker of Cremona* made the moviegoer realise that here was a star of the future.

When the public clamoured for her name Biograph refused to divulge it ; but raised Mary's salary to £7 a week. She, not satisfied, wrote to Essanay and offered to transfer to them for an extra £3 a week. Essanay, surely to their eternal chagrin, turned down the offer.

Meanwhile, Mary's fame was growing picture by picture and the British renters, deciding to cash-in on her popularity, announced her name as Dorothy Nicholson. And she stayed Miss Nicholson for many months to British film-goers.

It was Carl Laemmle who first began to realise that there was money in the " star " idea, and so publicly announced the names of Florence Lawrence and other popular players of his. Biograph promptly reversed their tactics and let it be known that their Biograph Girl—as Mary had been generally known—was really Mary Pickford.

And so the First Film Star was born. Incidentally, in Britain this announcement caused a lot of very red faces.

Chaplin and Mary, although players in such a different category, were almost equal in popularity, and their salaries, with their fame, rose together. When Chaplin signed for £2,000 a week Miss Pickford demanded the same amount.

Both their wages leapt ahead and so laid the foundation for the colossal salaries of to-day. At one time Miss Pickford had a guarantee from Famous Players for a million dollars in two years.

VI.

And now to go back a bit.

The Independents, more or less secure in their new Hollywood homes, soon discovered that the best way to beat the Trust was to turn out longer and better films than their rivals. In 1908-9 they produced a series of " First Class " two reelers, including *The Roman* and *The Evil Men Do* (made by Vitagraph and starring L. Rogers Lytton).

As a reply to this move the Trust produced a very arty, and artificial, *Life of Moses*, which was not a success.

At first the Independents had been up against the important fact that the Trust owned a very large number of cinemas and therefore always had a certain market for their productions. Later, to counteract this, the Independents organised their own chain of cinemas so that they too could make their films with the comfortable knowledge that they had a market waiting for their product.

In 1913, with much blaring of trumpets, the first *Quo Vadis* was produced and presented at the Astor Theatre on Broadway. It ran there from April to the end of the year ; a record. The film was a great success throughout America and Canada and it marked a definite change-over on the part of the American producers to the super-film.

About this time Cecil Blount de Mille (to this day the great maestro of the spectacle movie—as I write he is making yet another " colossal " technicolored epic) arrived in Hollywood with £5,000 and some very large-size ideas.

For his first film, *The Squaw Man*, he engaged Dustin Farnum as the star at the then very high cost of £1,000. De Mille had to overcome a lot of difficulties to complete the film, but finally when it was " put in the tin " it proved to be a great success and de Mille's future was assured—as was the financial stability of The Jesse L. Lasky Feature Player Company.

The Foreign Film : Glamorous Hedy Lamaar achieved notoriety with her performance in the Czechoslovakian sex film " Extase " (" Ecstasy ")—seen here with Aribert Mog—in which she appeared in the nude. It is interesting to compare this Miss Lamaar with the one, groomed and beautified, we see in the Hollywood productions of to-day.

The Foreign Film : Outstanding French film, and the French pre-war studios produced many great movies, is Julien Duvivier's prize-winning " Carnet de Bal." This scene shows Marie Bell and Francoise Rosay.

VII.

Although this brings the history of the American movies up to the outbreak of the 1914 war, before we can pass on to the films produced during the war years we must consider what was happening in other parts of the world during this period.

Actually events were taking place in several countries that were to have a definite influence in one way or another on the future of the film.

The first British studio had been Paul's at Newton Avenue, New Southgate; the first professional film actor was a man called Johnny Butt (who received 5/- for appearing in his first film but was later to earn as much as £10 in a day). Butt made appearances in *Blackmail* (the first British talkie) and *The Informer*. He died in 1931.

The second studio was at Hove. It was a large glass-roofed affair which was still standing (as being used as a furniture storehouse) when last I visited that town some years ago, and for all I know it may be there still.

Another early studio was in Fulham, where Cricks and Martin—a firm of considerable repute in their day and the possessors of a Lion trade mark—produced such heartrending epics as *Drink and Repentance*. The studio was situated on a piece of waste land hard-by a brewery but it has never been ascertained if this fact was in any way connected with the first film to be made there.

To Cricks and Martin goes the honour of being the first producers to introduce the sub-title and in 1909 this firm made a movie called *Air Pirates of* 1920, which turned out to be quite a prophetic peep into the future, as it included the bombing of a liner by an airship.

It was somewhere around now that the first British film comedian, " Pimple," made his appearance.

At the Clarendon Studios in Croydon, at one time the largest British studio, a film was churned out with machine-like regularity every week, while in Sheffield a Frank S. Mottershaw started to make films with natural backgrounds.

Mottershaw had at one time worked the camera for Paul, so he was very strong on this side of the business. His first film was the longest that had ever been attempted in this country (there was more than 400 feet of it) and it was such a success that it was actually sold to America.

Mottershaw decided to follow up his first success with a really ambitious drama and turned out *The Life of Charles Peace*, photographing it largely on the actual spots where Peace had committed his crimes.

It must be remembered that taking films by artificial light was still more or less an unknown art and the outdoor scenes—even the indoor sets were constructed in the open in order that the sun could be used as illuminant—were always the basis of a movie.

Another man to rise in the early British films industry was Arthur Coleby, who worked as director for Cricks and Martin as well as several other firms. It was he who gave Victor McLaglen his first chance in films, *The Call of the Road*.

McLaglen, the son of a South African Bishop, was until then making his living by boxing, and it was during a bout at the old National Sporting Club that Coleby noticed him and decided to give him his chance. Others that Coleby introduced to the screen were Ralph Forbes (still making films in Hollywood, of course) and William Freshman (later to become a Producer and Script Writer).

In those days films were still mostly of the one-day affairs (that is to say, one day to make, one reel in length and fifteen minutes to show) but this country did produce the first real super-film, *Jane Shore*, which was finished a year in front of *Birth of a Nation*, cost more than £6,000 and employed as many artists.

In surveying, even as briefly as we are here, the story of the early British movies, the name of Hepworth must certainly not be omitted.

Cecil M. Hepworth started by producing movies in the lower back room of his house, and in the garden. That was in the very early days; later he introduced such stars as Chrissie White, Stewart Rome and Henry Edwards (who married Miss White) both of whose film careers stretch from 1900 to the present day.

In France during this early period the film was also making great forward strides. In 1908 *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* (second version, first had been shown in 1903) caused Charles Pathe (himself a famous maker of movies) to turn to the brothers Lafitte, the producers, and say, " Ah, gentlemen you are the masters."

The film was a sensation, yet to-day on seeing it again one only notices that the scenery is not too well painted and quivers with every movement of the players.

The French producers went " classic " mad. In 1909 Anatole France's *Red Lily* was filmed. When the famous author saw it later he is reported to have said, " How very interesting, how really extraordinary ! But are you quite certain that it really is *The Red Lily* ? "

The films were overrun with stage players who over-acted ridiculously for the most part and yet still looked down their noses at this rather vulgar form of entertainment. But they continued to deign to act for it. Sarah Bernhardt, after her debut in *Hamlet*, made several films one at least of which, *Queen Elizabeth* in 1912, was a success all over the world.

In 1907 *The Prodigal Child* opened at the Varieties in Paris and ran there for more than a hundred performances. It is notable for the fact that it was in three parts, each part being in excess of fifteen hundred feet, and had special musical score by Wormser written for it to fit the mood and action. During this period France did produce at least one great artiste, the comedian Max Linder. Linder's art was Chaplin-ish, and he suffered by comparison in consequence. But in France at one time he seems to have become almost a national hero.

In Italy the movie-making firm of Ambrosia was formed in 1908. In 1912 *Cabria* was started (it took two years to make and cost £5,000). But all these early films, from whatever country they originated, shared a theatricality which to-day makes them seem absurd farces.

In Russia, Denmark, Sweden and Germany the film was progressing. The Danish industry started in 1906 when Ole Olsen, founder of Nordisk Films (later to become a world- powerful company) bought an old horse, and lion from the Zoo which had

The Foreign Film : Emil Jannings, last in the line of great German movie actors, in " Der Zerbrockene Krug—The Broken Jug " (about 1936).

The British Film : In 1935 that great French director Rene Clair (responsible for " Sous Les Toits de Paris," etc.) came over to England and made one film before going on to America. Called " The Ghost Goes West," it was a strange mixture, but rather a lovely one. Robert Donat was the star.

been condemned to be shot because of its aged condition, and some plants and set off for a small island where he made a short film.

In talking of the early days of the movies it is too often forgotten that these several countries were producing movies fairly regularly and, indeed, made at least one or two films that were classics of their age and earned world acclaim.

By the outbreak of the first world war the motion picture was already established as one of the foremost industries of the world. In America alone there were about 15,000 cinemas ; as one writer has put it, Europe went to war and America went to the movies.

It has become a respectable form of amusement, too. Already some people were wondering if the screen would kill the stage, and opinion was as divided on this subject then as it is now.

PART 3.

THE SILENT DAYS—1914-1929.

I.

The War had a profound effect on the film and its developments. In Germany, France and Britain production was virtually brought to a standstill for four years and during this period eventually the lead inevitably went to America, to whom the war for a long time was just something happening across the Atlantic.

Some of the most vivid films of this period emanating from the countries actually engaged in the war were the newsreels, which suddenly leapt into prime importance. Many of the shots were taken at the risk of the cameraman's life. Faking, which had been a constant vice of the early reels, went out of fashion and reality became the thing.

Italy, entirely unaffected at first and even later only to a lesser extent than any of the other combatants, was the first country to take the lead. Large scale movies were made. Italian film stars began to throw their weight about in a tremendous fashion and introduced temperament to the movies. To what extent the Italian players went is described by Maurice Bardeche and Robert Brasillach in their *French History of the Film.*

" Francesca Bertini insisted on making a *Camille* because Hesperia had just made one. Each of the ladies was backed by a lawyer, Bertini by Barattolo and Hesperia by Mecheri both of them millionaires who engaged in a mutual contest of " bigger and better " films and financial coups, to the lasting injury of the Italian films. . . Febo Mari, while making *Attila,* refused to wear a beard, whereupon Albert Capozzi, appearing in *St. Paul,* declared that he saw no reason why he should sport so ridiculous an appendage and insisted on being clean-shaven too. This war of the beards was typical."

II.

In America the movies went steadily ahead, improving technically all the while. At the same time more attention was paid to the cinemas; they were made more comfortable, and began to bear more resemblance to the movie palace as we know it to-day.

Stars rose to fame, stars whose names are still household words to-day. Amongst these was Douglas Fairbanks, (real name Douglas Ullman) who started his film career in 1914 under the Griffith banner. Fairbanks was always a boy's hero. He did incredible deeds of daring, was always ready to defend a lady's honour to the death, and was always smiling. Swarthy, handsome and dashing he literally leapt his way to fame.

Harold Lloyd was another star whose light waxed mightily during this period. Lloyd had started his career at the age of 12, when he appeared as Little Abe in *Tess of d'Ubervilles,* and his first screen appearance was for Edison in 1913. Later he signed his first contract with Hal Roach for a series of comedies. His first role was that of Willie Work (I find few people who can remember this series) but as it did not seem to take the public's fancy he later altered his characterisation to Lonesome Luke. While making both series of comedies he helped Roach in other films, playing all kinds of small roles.

It was in the Lonesome Luke series that Bebe Daniels got her first chance on the screen. Though only 13 at the time (she started her screen career at the ripe age of 4 in a tour of *Richard III*) she was a success and has ever since been kept busy with stage and screen parts. Her recent success in the *Hi Gang* radio series has no real place in these pages, but it is difficult not to mention it for all that.

Lonesome Luke was eventually succeeded by the bespectacled Lloyd we know to-day; the dumb-looking fellow who somehow always manages to get the better of wiseacres and bad men, emerging victorious to win the lovely girl in the end—though this only after a suitable number of hair-raising (remember *Safety Last*?) and extremely funny slap-stick adventures.

Gloria Swanson—who recently made a very successful come-back in *Father Takes a Wife,* in which she co-starred with

The British Film : One of the early British epic films (1913) was " Rupert of Hentzau." This scene (taken on the set shown on page 34) includes, from left to right, Douglas Munro, Nelson Ramsey, Stella St. Audrie (between the two Pages of Honour), Jane Gail, Charles Rock as ' Colonel Sapte ' and Henry Ainley.

The British Film : One of the great triumphs in the career of actor Charles Laughton and firm London Films Ltd. (the original Korda set-up) was " The Private Life of Henry VIII " (1933). Here Henry is shown, with some of his eight wives, in a moment between shots. (By courtesy of Paul Rotha who supplied still from his collection)

another trouper of the old silents, Adolphe Menjou—started her career in the very earliest days of the movies with Essanay (in *Elvira Fatina* and *The Meal Ticket*) and then went to Keystone to appear in a number of Mack Sennett slapstick comedies. One of her earlier films was *Queen Kelly*, which was reputed to be so bad that "they re-shot two reels before putting it on the shelf." Miss Swanson eventually graduated to drama and became one of the foremost tragediennes of her day, appearing in well over a hundred films before she formed her own corporation, in 1926, and started to make her own pictures.

Roscoe—Fatty—Arbuckle, who co-starred so often with tragic Mabel Normand was, as his title implies, a man of great poundage. But he also had a delicacy of touch and a certain inspiration which lighted the comedies he played and soon made him much beloved by the average moviegoer.

But scandal put out its long finger, more or less at random it seems, and came to rest on Arbuckle. The resultant defame was just the excuse the newspapers were waiting for to "Bust Hollywood wide open!"

With so many people living in the film colony, getting immense (for that time) salaries, far above anything they had been used to, there was almost certain to be trouble. The sudden access to wealth went to their heads.

A series of wild parties culminated in a girl being found dead and Arbuckle charged with her murder. Arbuckle was found to be completely innocent, but his career, and his life, was ruined by the scandal which, figuratively at any rate, shook America.

Throughout the States the good women who had loudly proclaimed their opinion of these evil "movies" sniffed loudly, shook their fingers, and muttered a triumphant "I Told You So." Clergymen everywhere were horrified and preached sermons about the subject from their pulpits.

Then, rapidly following on this affair, came the news that a director, William Taylor, had been found murdered. When Taylor's not too pearly linen was washed in public stories, both fact and fiction, of Hollywood's excesses filled the papers. The film colony was accused of drinking, doping and horrible orgies. Reporters, sent from all over America, collected unpleasant and

lurid stories from devious places. America, shocked, demanded that action be taken.

The moviemakers themselves, much alarmed by the public feeling stirred up against them, forestalled any further moves by making a sudden quick dive towards complete respectability.

They decided to form a certain code of production to which all of them should strictly adhere. They also decided to put any artists who brought the films into evil repute on a black list. Ten leading Hollywood producers approached President Harding and asked if one of his cabinet would serve as their President.

The result of this was that Mr. Will Hays became first—and present—President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Inc. Hays, a Master of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, Doctor of Laws and an elder of the Methodist Church, was an eminently respectable figure for the job. He resigned his position as Postmaster-General to take up his new post in 1922.

A new era then began in which the movie people set out to convince the world how respectable they were. The publicity departments poured out millions of words about the stars' quiet home life, pictures were taken of Miss Blank at the kitchen range and Mr. Dash taking his dog for its evening walk.

The original invitation to Hays did not refer to censorship nor indeed (though this I find is always contrary to general belief) does the Hays organisation even now have any official censorship rights. The movie-makers merely tried to wipe out the nasty taste that the several scandals had left in the public's mouth (especially the essentially straight-laced American public) and they " realised the necessity for attaining and maintaining the highest possible standard of motion picture film production in this country (America) and are striving to have the industry accorded the consideration and dignity to which it is justly entitled and proper representation before the people of this country so that its position, at all times, may be presented in an unbiassed and unprejudiced manner."

In practice Hays does have a great effect on the motion pictures turned out. Usually a producer submits his story to the Hays office for approval before he goes ahead with the film

and the Hays office then tells the producer whether he is likely to have trouble with the film or not. In almost every case a warning answer is quite enough for the producer to scrap his story. Although this has been announced periodically over a large number of years there are many people, even amongst those going to the movies once or even twice a week, who still believe that there is an official censorship of films. Actually, of course, there is nothing of the sort. It is quite a voluntary censorship which is run by the movie-makers themselves.

Periodically trouble has risen over certain films even after they have been passed as O.K. by the Hays office. America, many parts of which hold moral ideas of the strictest kind, suddenly attack certain movies. Various states ban them. But all-in-all the voluntary system works very well indeed, and is not likely to be replaced by any official censorship—at least not in the near future.

But after that digression let us get back to the stars who arose to fame in America during the war period.

John Bunny and Flora Finch (if you don't remember their names surely you recall them when I tell you Bunny was enormously fat and Finch was terribly lean), cross-eyed Ben Turpin (whose last part was in that Technicolored history of the movies, *Hollywood Cavalcade*), Larry Semon, Hatty Pollard, (Snub Pollard as he was called who started with Broncho Billy Anderson, then played with Chaplin and made 200 films in ten years for Hal Roach), Harry Langdon (who later deputised for Stanley Laurel in *Elephants Never Forget* when the Laurel and Hardy partnership came unstuck—incidentally both Laurel and Hardy were separately acting in films during the last war years), Louise Fazenda (started in 1915); they all had their hour of fame, were as well known and loved in their day as any of our stars are now.

Two of the most popular leading men of this period were Maurice Costello and Francis X. Bushman (the former was working in films as far back as 1908, the latter in 1911) both of whom were still occasionally appearing in the movies in the 1930's.

One of the few really outstanding directors that the war years produced was Thomas Ince. Ince's first movie was in 1910. Later he directed an enormous number of films and it

The British Film : One of the great moments from " Trilby " (1913), with Viva Birkett as Trilby and Sir Herbert Tree as Svengali. Harold Shaw directed.

The British Film : One of the greatest films that the British studios have ever turned out is Noel Coward's superb " In Which We Serve," the story of a destroyer. The versatile Coward here ventured into the movies in a big way for the first time and made a big success of it. He wrote the story, directed and starred (1942).

was he who brought to the movies a new kind of cowboy, William S. Hart, and with Hart brought to the screen a new and better Western. Hart was a screen actor as distinct from a stage actor, and under Ince's direction became one of the finest screen players of his time

Ince (who died in 1924 at the early age of 44) was like Griffith in that he knew that the art of the screen must be entirely divorced from the stage. He was one of the first men to understand the necessity for smooth movement in a film, to try and get the action to flow. He had an exquisite sense of pathos too, and who can remember the Bill Hart series of films without recalling that inevitable sad ending when Hart, the adventure finished and the girl safely in the arms of another man, rode on into the sunset. . . .

I could go on with this list for many pages, too many pages for a book of this type. But just before I do pass on there are one or two names that I cannot, under any consideration, leave out of any history of the movies.

One of these is Theda Bara, the first " vamp " and the first woman to blatantly bring the lure of sex to the screen.

Over Theda's head the biggest barrage yet produced by the publicity guns of Hollywood rang out. It was whispered loud and long that Miss Bara " was the daughter of a French artist and an Arabian mistress, and that she was born in the sandy wastes of the Sahara." To prove their claims the publicity hounds pointed triumphantly to the conclusive fact that her name Theda was a re-arrangement of the word Death and that Bara was Arab spelt backwards. To further substantiate their claim they took many pictures of Miss Bara surrounded by palms, looking terrifically exotic (although when you look through these stills to-day one could find a more fitting word to use.)

But the little shop-girls in America were thrilled to the core and lapped up the story, with the result that Theda Bara was a great draw when the name was put up outside the cinemas. Direct consequence of this was a whole cycle of vamp (short for vampire, of course), films in each of which stars tried to out-exotic each other.

The prosaic truth was that Theda Bara, who had never seen sand or palms outside of California, was really Miss Theodosia

Goodman from Cincinatti, Ohio, and had already made several films for the Pathe company under the name of De Coppit.

Theda Bara was a lurid personality built by the stunt publicity department, but there were many figures in the film colony whose real life stories would have made nearly as strange reading.

Take, for instance, the case of Mary Miles Minter (at one time popular enough to be considered a real rival to Mary Pickford) who, at the age of 8, actually ran her own touring company and played the title role of *The Little Rebel.* At 12 she was playing the leads in films and rose to great fame. But, another tragedy, she was mixed up by gossip in the murder of William Taylor and as no film career can stand up long against scandal, she faded from the public's gaze in the resultant unwanted publicity.

Last name I shall mention here is Buster Keaton. Keaton started the show business as a baby with his parents in the 3 Keatons turn. Later he continued with them in their knockabout act. In 1917 he made his first screen appearance with Roscoe Arbuckle. His method was entirely original in that he always played with a dead pan—or a face devoid of expression. Whatever happened to him—and plenty did—no flicker of expression ever came on that white face and the result was extremely funny.

III.

This seems about the spot where the story of the screen serial might well be inserted. Certainly it rose to great world-wide popularity during the war years.

The first serials were a series of episodes each complete in itself but with the same stars taking the roles of the same set of characters throughout, as *The Adventures of Nick Carter,* and *Morgan the Pirate.* Later these were improved and the Fantomas (which came from Paris and were based on the series of popular novels by Allain and Souvestre) were followed by such American serials as *The Exploits of Elaine, The Perils of Pauline,* etc.

Pearl White became the undisputed Queen of the Serials. At thirteen she was a bareback rider in a circus, and she brought to the screen all the daring of the performers of the Big Tent.

Who can forget those serials ? The complete episode idea was soon given up when it was realised that it was commercially desirable that at the end of each episode, as with the serial story, the hero or/and heroine should be left in a position of dire peril. It was natural, human curiosity being what it is, that at least 90 per cent. of the audience would want to know how the stars got out of their terrible predicament and so would come along next week to see how they did so. Then, having got out of that position of peril, the stars rushed through various hair-raising adventures to end up in a similar position at the end of that week. And so on. In this way the public were induced to go to their local cinema regularly every week.

The serials were fantastic, terrifying, exciting and eminently good screen entertainment. People were tied in front of on-coming expresses, drove cars over crashing bridges, fought battles over roof-tops and on mountain edges, chased each other along roads and lanes, fell over precipices and out of windows, killed each other with mysterious rays, and always there were clutching hands to make the shadows a region of sheer terror.

All this was done at a frantic rate. Never before or after has the movie lived so much up to its title and moved so consistently and so rapidly. And because of this, because of their exciting tempo, these serials swept the world. They became popular in every country.

In Cairo during the last war the Arabs were as enthusiastic in following their white heroine as were the British Tommies and all the other nationalities in that cosmopolitan town. Never before or after were films quite so cosmopolitan in their appeal (although the same must be said of Charlie Chaplin) and those years 1914-1918 can be marked down as the highest peak of international popularity which it was possible for the movies to attain.

The serials were responsible for the introduction of the stunt players, the daring women and men who " doubled " for the stars when a particularly dangerous deed was to be done.

Musicals : Anita Page and Bessie Love in a scene from " Broadway Melody " (1929), first of the large, lavish, back-stage musical films.

Musicals : The inspirational teaming of the fleet-footed Fred Astaire with chorine Ginger Rogers resulted in a whole string of great musicals, from " Flying Down to Rio " (1933) to " The Story of Irene and Vernon Castle " (1939).

Musicals : The musical film reached its zenith of spectacular magnificence in M.G.M.'s long and glittering " The Great Ziegfeld " (1936). This is the " A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody " number.

IV.

In France at the start of the war the industry completely died, as I have already said. But is worth noting that when it did begin to get going again it made the big mistake (and this is a lesson that has had to be learned all over again by the movie-makers during this war) of making patriotic and war films. They were a complete flop. The French audiences were having enough of the war, and so they flocked to the American comedies for light relief.

After this the French trade learnt its lesson and began to concentrate on comedies and melodramas that had nothing to do with current events.

In Germany during the war the industry struggled along the best it could. Here, too, patriotic films were the order of the day and, with their usual gift for organisation, the Germans set up 800 cinemas for their troops at the fronts, providing them mostly with instructional films. In spite of all the obstacles the industry produced several stars of the screen during the war that were to become famous.

Of these Pola Negri and Emil Jannings were later to become stars of world repute, and Ernst Lubitsch, who had studied acting under Max Reinhardt, was to become one of America's most outstanding directing figures.

Incidentally, Lubitsch's first American film was *Rosita*, starring Mary Pickford. It was in a Lubitsch film of 1915 that Jannings made his first screen appearance. Max Reinhardt himself was asking and receiving vast sums for directing his movies and, in spite of all the poverty, film salaries climbed to dizzy heights towards 1918 when a war-weary Germany was willing to pay its last pfennig to escape reality for a short time.

In spite of the opposition of the American film the Swedish industry continued to produce a goodly number of interesting movies, although in Denmark the studios were soon retreating from, and were finally entirely conquered by the great German firm of UFA which had just been formed.

In Russia the film was developing along truly nationalistic lines and already there were being laid the foundations of the

revolutionary epics, films which were later to be recognised as some of the finest filmic creations that the world has ever seen.

And so we come to the year 1919, the first year of peace and the first year of a new, and gigantic, flowering of an industry which already was world-wide and terrific in its potentialities.

1919 saw many things ; it saw the sudden increase in the growth of larger and better cinemas ; it saw Griffith star Lilian Gish in Burke's famous Limehouse Nights tale, *Broken Blossoms* ; the first of the super-sobbies *Way Down East* (also with Miss Gish) ; and it saw the four wealthiest people of the screen, Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, D. W. Griffith and Douglas Fairbanks join hands and fortunes to found the firm of United Artists.

V.

From 1919 to the coming of the talkies was the golden era for the silent films. America, and other countries, were on the crest of the after-war wave.

Let us look back at some of the most outstanding films of this period. From America came de Mille's first of a series of great religious productions, *The Ten Commandments* (it goes down in history as the first de Mille million-dollar epic) with the " colossal " spectacle of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea.

The Covered Waggon was the first of the great Western epics. It was made by James Cruze and was even more expensive than de Mille's film ; on more than one occasion it has been reported that it cost its producers a million pounds. Whatever it cost it certainly made a fortune.

In 1922 O'Flaherty made *Nanook of the North* and blazed the trail for the series of half-documentary half-story films built around real people and real places that were to follow, although to follow all too infrequently. Nobody who saw *Nanook* will ever forget it. It had a lyrical charm and a flowing movement that was Flaherty, the artist, at his unequalled best. Flaherty actually undertook a Polar expedition to collect material for this film.

All Flaherty's films have needed expeditions to get material. He followed his Northern movie with a year spent in the Samoan

Isles making *Moana.* More recently he made *Man of Aran,* a great natural movie, and a strange film called *Elephant Boy* for Korda in which the mixture of good Flaherty and poor Korda added up to indifferent movie.

Douglas Fairbanks reached the height of his fame with *The Three Musketeers, Mark of Zorro,* and *Robin Hood.* In 1919 Charlie Chaplin made *The Kid* without scenario and script, an amazing example of " shooting off the cuff " or improvisation. He followed it with *The Pilgrim, The Gold Rush* and (in '22) *A Woman of Paris.* In this Chaplin did not himself appear except for a fleeting second as a porter, and is generally not noticed at all, but his direction made the film outstanding. A technical innovation of some moment in this was the effect of using the *outline* of a train coming to rest at the platform, a pause (in which the heroine seemingly got into one of the carriages), and then the shadow moved away.

The stars of *Woman of Paris* were Adolphe Menjou and Edna Purviance and both gave beautiful performances. Chaplin broke new ground in this film and marked yet another milestone in the history of the cinema. It was the first time that a bad character had been shown as having any finer feelings.

Fred Niblo, who earned the distinction of touring on the stage in every English-speaking country, directed *Mark of Zorro* and *Three Musketeers* for Fairbanks, *Blood and Sand* for Valentino (of whom more later) and went on to make—in 1925 —*Ben Hur* which, high on the list of all-time money-spinners, made more than 4 million dollars.

Ben Hur was the greatest spectacle film ever made. To this day, in spite of all its technical disadvantages it remains a wonderful movie.

Rudolph Valentino's fame arose out of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalyse,* the film which, produced in 1921, was to gross more than 4½ million dollars and to take its place at the head of the list of all the movie money-makers, a position which it held until *The Singing Fool* startled the world into the realisation that talkies had come to the screen, and which beat it by half-a-million dollars.

The Four Horsemen was produced in February, and by November the unknown Valentino (who was actually an Italian

The World's Sweetheart : Yesterday it was Mary Pickford who soared to fame and considerable fortune in this role.

The World's Sweetheart : To-day it is the young and lovely Deanna Durbin who brings a similar freshness to the screen and is placed on the same throne by the moviegoers.

Great Actress : One of the great ladies of the silent screen was Norma Talmadge, who made her debut at the age of 14 and went on to make something like 300 films.

Great Actress : In a similar position on the talking screen is Bette Davis, one of the finest actresses appearing in films to-day.

with the name of Rudolph Alfonso Raffaelo Pierre Filiberto Guglielmi di Valentino d'Antonguella and who went to America with the intention of doing gardening but was reduced to washing dishes in a New York hotel) was star of *The Sheik* and thousands of women had begun to make fools of themselves over him.

Blood and Sand and *Son of the Sheik* followed, and Valentino's adoring feminine public grew mightily. When he died unprecedented scenes were to take place ; women killed themselves, and his funeral was a terrific affair.

Yet viewing Valentino's work dispassionately, I don't think he could ever be claimed as either a great actor or even a great screen player. I have seen *The Sheik* many times and always I am entirely unimpressed by its hero.

Another foreigner, Count Erich Oswald Hans Carl Marie Stroheim von Nordenwald—or Erich von Stroheim as we know him—came to Hollywood to make his screen debut in Griffith's *Intolerance* in 1916. Although he never had Valentino's popularity he certainly made a far greater contribution to the art and advancement of the movie.

Stroheim, an ex-cavalry officer from Austria, is better known to-day as an actor in British, American and French movies and it is generally forgotten that at one time he was one of the outstanding directorial figures in America.

Superbly arrogant, beautifully villainous (and extremely extravagant) Stroheim began to get plenty of work at the end of the war when, as a Prussian officer, he was in great demand for the glut of war films then put on the market. An astute publicity man labelled him as " The Man You Love to Hate."

Then Stroheim began to turn to direction and at once began to stamp his originality on his work. He had previously written and played the star role in a stage play *Blind Husbands*, and this was his first success in this direction.

Stroheim was an extremely intelligent and versatile artist. He was writer, actor and director. He had at one time been a newspaper reporter in Austria, and it was in this job that he earned his first money in America.

After *Blind Husbands* his directing career was marked by a long succession of arguments with his producers. He started to

direct a film called *Merry-Go-Round* but after one of these frequent upheavals the job was handed to someone else.

It was then that Stroheim began his tremendous movie, *Greed*. This was a meticulously careful adaption of the novel *McTeague*, in which Zasu Pitts played a deadly serious role and made it the acting achievement of her career. Stroheim started to throw money about like water, and then—spent more. Millions of dollars passed through his hands and his producers must have spent many a sleepless night when they thought about balancing the budget—by now a hopeless proposition. Finally, when he had been going on like this for months and had got the entire film world seething with curiosity Stroheim produced his masterpiece to his astonished and bewildered backers.

It was 28 reels in length, which meant that, run continuously without any breaks, it would take seven hours to show. And, intimated Von S., there was to be no question of cutting. Other sources have it that the original cutting was to 43 and not 28 reels and that Stroheim planned that it should run on three consecutive evenings.

It is unlikely now that we shall ever know how great a success or failure *Greed* was, for it was eventually hacked into a more usual length and probably completely ruined in the process. Stroheim at any rate promptly disowned it.

Greed lost a million dollars for its producers but earned the unstinted praises of the critics wherever it was shown.

VI.

In Britain the after-war period saw the industry struggling hard but without much success. It was not until 1922 that the first British serial was produced, *The Great London Mystery* starring Lady Doris Stapleton—this was the time when titles on the screen were considered to be of great value—and David Devant, the illusionist of Maskelyne and Devant fame.

Things got worse and with the complete domination of the market by the Americans there wasn't a single British film being made in 1924. It looked as though the British film was dead. The question was whether it should be left to lie down or whether some effort be made to resurrect it.

It had been realised for some time that the only way to do this latter was to pass some measure forcing cinemas to show so much footage of British film every year. The authors of the plan, later to be called the British Quota Act, were George Ridgewell (a director), Captain Rex Davis (actor and M.P.) and —of all people—Victor McLaglen.

In 1923, after a year spent in planning, these three started to go to work. By every possible means, in the press, at public meetings, and writing to M.P.'s, they spread their propaganda.

But the fight was long, and it was not until 4 years later that the Quota Act was finally passed; with it the British Film Industry was saved from inevitable extinction.

During the pre-talkie years Britain produced few pictures of note, but amongst those that are best remembered are Betty Balfour in *Squibs* and *The Glorious Adventure* with Lady Diana Manners and Victor McLaglen.

VII.

Before we leave the silent film and come to the talkie and the complete revolution of movie entertainment that this innovation entailed, let us take a glance to see what was happening to the silent film in other parts of the world at its peak period.

France, like Britain, had the handicap of the war years on her industry's shoulders and she, too, fell sadly behind in the race for both the national and international markets; the American film swamped the French cinemas.

Maurice Badeche and Robert Brasilach writing of the French film during the period 1920-25 say that during that time the history of the commercial cinema in France was the history of the one firm of Pathe-Natan. It was not a pleasing history. This powerful and well-organised firm hardly produced one good film.

Abel Gance, a director of some considerable note, experimented with a triple-screen idea and actually used it for presenting his epic film *Napoleon*. But the scheme proved a costly failure and was soon dropped. Cavalcanti, who has since become one of our ace documentary producers, made several films. But of all the men of the French cinema of this period the most

Great Actress : Pauline Frederick, famous name of the silent screen, who started her career in stage musical comedy but made her real mark in dramatic roles in films like " Madame X " " Resurrection " and " The Sacred Flame."

Great Actress : Greer Garson, the red-headed girl from County Down, is winning " Oscars " and the moviegoers acclaim for fine work in films like " Mrs. Minniver," " Random Harvest " and " Madame Curie." This picture was taken when Miss Garson first arrived in Hollywood in 1940.

Great Actress : Here is Miss Garson as she appears to-day, in a scene with Walter Pidgeon from M.G.M.'s " Madame Curie " (1944).

outstanding was Rene Clair. Clair had ideas, a lovely sense of satire, and his films have always been charming fantasy. Later Clair was to come to England and then go to America. His outstanding films were *An Italian Straw Hat* and *The Last Millionaire.*

In Germany some of the classic silent films were made. Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, and Pabst all arose as outstanding directors. And then there came from out of Germany one of the strangest and most impressive of all silent films, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* in which Conrad Veidt played the part of a somnabulist. The settings were all done with the idea of creating an atmosphere of madness and the results were some of the strangest ever created for the screen, certainly the most futuristic.

The German cinema of this period deserves a book all to itself. It was continually experimenting, and worth-while films, interesting films, were being produced at comparatively short intervals.

It has always been realised that the ideal silent film would need no sub-titles to help tell the story, and about this time the Germans made such a film. *The Last Laugh,* starring Emil Jannings. Lighting and photography were all given greater attention than ever before and this careful treatment of the technicalities helped to produce startlingly beautiful films.

One of the great films of the later period was *Metropolis,* from Fritz Lang.

It was the Swedish film which, in 1924, brought Greta Gustafson (better known as Greta Garbo) to the screen. Garbo began life as a clerk in a store but got her first film opportunity when used as a model for an advertising film about hats.

That led to a part in a custard-pie slinging comedy of the Keystone style, and later to her part in *The Atonement of Gosta Berling* ; this in turn made the M.G.M. firm interested enough in her to bring her to America on contract. Garbo made her first American film in 1926, the title of it was *The Torrent.*

And this brings us to the end of our survey of the silent film. Now, quite suddenly, it began to talk, and so brought about a revolution in cinema entertainment.

PART 4.

THE SCREEN TALKS.

I.

Sound was brought to the screen as a desperate gamble by a firm of moviemakers who were sliding rapidly on to the rocks. That, to put it baldly, is the story of the advent of the talkies as a form of public entertainment.

As we have already seen, the talking picture, or sound film which preceded it slightly, was anything but a new idea. If you didn't skip the first few pages of this book you'll recall that the Edison people, by roughly synchronising a gramophone record with a short length of film, had fixed up a crude kind of "talkie" as early as the end of the nineteenth century. Just a few years later, in 1911, a M. Lauste achieved photography of sound and vision on one film (although in this connection it is as well to remember that the basic principle of photographing sound was known to scientists even before 1900).

In 1920 Theodore Case patented the photo-electric cell; three years later the De Forest Phonofilm—sound on film as distinct from sound on disc—was demonstrated to an audience at the New York Rivoli Theatre.

But before we can go on to the first presentation of the sound-movie as actual entertainment we shall have to retrace our steps a little.

The four Warner brothers in 1925 had come a long way since the day they closed their bicycle store and opened their first (shop) cinema. When the big companies such as Paramount, Fox and Universal had started the race to buy up cinemas and form their own chains of houses at which they could release their product and so be certain of a constant market for all the movies they turned out, good, bad and indifferent—the Warner boys had been left badly behind. They didn't manage to secure many cinemas and so although they found it comparatively easy to make films they began to find it extremely difficult to find enough independent cinemas in which to show them, and were often compelled to rent them out at knock-down rates.

It has often been said that during those dark days in the history of Warners the brothers were only kept from bankruptcy by Rin Tin Tin.

How much this ex-German army dog did bring into their coffers has never been revealed, but it must have been an enormous sum. Most famous of a long line of canine stars, Rin Tin Tin earned his owners £400 a week. Another factor which undoubtedly kept the firm solvent was Lionel Barrymore, who was then held on contract.

It was at this moment, the shakiest in their history, that Western Electirc offered them their Vitaphone sound system.

Western Electric had been experimenting with this sound-on-disc system for some time and now, considering that it had reached a state when it had become a practical, if a novelty, form of entertainment they offered it to the Hollywood movie magnates. But this was the golden age of the silent film, remember, and the movie magnates found that a constant stream of this gold was pouring into their pockets. So why experiment, they said; let us leave a good thing alone. And they turned the Vitaphone down flat.

Western Electric, having exhausted the major firms turned to Warners and Sam Warner, admittedly impressed, in sheer desperation decided to take a gamble. The Warners started to make sound-on-disc films.

They started off carefully. Realising that the invention was not yet far enough advanced for the satisfactory reproduction of the human voice (the sound that came from the loud-speakers was still crude; blurred, squeaky, scratchy) they began to produce short variety films, musical interludes, music-hall acts, dance bands, etc. Their first programme of all-sound film shorts was given at their New York Theatre on August 6th, 1926. Apart from several musical movies the programme included Barrymore in Don Juan—there was no speaking in the latter, however, which was really a silent movie with post-synchronised sound accompaniment, a type of film which was to persist for some little while.

The show was a great success and through it Warners had many enquiries from go-ahead exhibitors as to the cost and trouble of installing the new sound equipment in their theatres.

As *They Were* : When we see Eugene Pallette to-day it is just a little difficult to realise that for a long time he played hero roles. Pallette was recruited to the cinema in 1914 and has been making films ever since. Here he is with Margery Wilson in " Intolerance " (1916).

As *They Were* : Norma Shearer, Ralph Forbes and Owen Moore were stars of M.G.M.'s " The Actress " (1928).

Then, in the following year, Warners made *The Jazz Singer*, and the future of the talking film was assured.

The Jazz Singer, sensation though it caused, was anything but a *good* film. It was a super-sobby which introduced Al Jolson, a Jew from Russia, who had been intended as a cantor in the synagogue, but actually became a nigger minstrel and ace-vocalist of "Mammy" songs. But the big moment of this movie was when Al Jolson, who was always ad libbing, spoke a sentence as he crossed to the piano to commence one of his songs. He merely said, "Listen to this Ma"—or words to that effect—and it was only as a sudden inspiration that the technicians let them stay on the record.

The shock of hearing those words at the first night performance was terrific, however. The audience loved it. That night public enthusiasm gave birth, and promise of a lusty childhood, to the talkie.

But Sam Warner, the gambler who had gambled and won, never saw how great were his winnings. On the day before *The Jazz Singer* sent the huge crowds buzzing enthusiastically into neon-lit Broadway Sam lay dead; a sudden illness had proved fatal.

As a footnote it is worth noting that *The Jazz Singer* went on to prove one of the biggest "riots" in the history of the movies, grossing over 3½ million dollars in rentals.

In the next year Warners produced *The Singing Fool*, again with Al Jolson in the leading role, apparently on the typical movie assumption that one good thing should be followed by another exactly like it, and this beat its predecessor by a cool million and a half dollars, and so became the record money-making movie, a record that stood unchallenged until *Gone With The Wind* came along to knock all previous records sideways—earning 31 million dollars in American rentals alone. *The Singing Fool* was the film in which Jolson sang the tear-jerking *Sonny Boy*, the song that was to sweep several continents.

By the time that 1929 had marched into 1930 Warners had risen to the top branches of the movie tree. They had purchased First National's string of cinemas and Harry Warner's worries faded into the distance; as one of the richest men in one of the richest industries why should he worry any more? Why, indeed!

Yet in spite of these big early successes for the sound-on-disc methods (surely you remember those old Warner talkies . . . . Vitaphone, all-talking, all-singing supers) the eventual winner was to be the sound-on-film method.

The Vitaphone system was a disc, a gramophone record, some 16 inches across and an inch thick, which was played at a much slower rate than the usual 80 revolutions a minute (the standard rate for ordinary records) in order to make each disc last one reel of film, thus synchronising the sound with the movements of the figures on the screen.

Sometimes in the early days, however, this did not work out in practice quite as it should by theory. Once or twice I have been in a cinema where the synchronisation has gone slightly astray for a little while with the result that one saw a character *say* something and *heard* them say it a moment later, by which time probably another character would be talking. Such hitches were good-humoredly accepted as all part of the fun by the public.

II.

As with the invention of the movies themselves several people or groups of people had been working concurrently on improvements in the talking film at several different places and even in different countries.

In England in 1925 the Lee De Forest Phonofilms (Lee De Forest, an American pioneer in radio, invented the 3-electrode vacuum tube and amplifier and so made possible the radio and talking film) were experimenting with sound films—by the sound-on-film method—at their studios in Clapham Road. In the previous year De Forest had produced a two-reel sound film in America entitled *Love's Old Sweet Song*, starring Una Merkel.

The early recording apparatus were rather Heath Robinson affairs and the difficulties that had to be overcome were many and varied. I was speaking quite recently to one of the late directors of a firm producing early British talkies and he told me something of the great adventure the business was in those days. He said that they reckoned to make a film in a day and the director was given £25 to do it. If at the end of the period

he couldn't deliver the goods, well, then he didn't get any money. "But they always finished on time, somehow," added my informant thoughtfully.

At the great Empire Exhibition at Wembley one of the "side-show" attractions was a cinema devoted to British talking pictures. Admission was 6d.

Though these De Forest sound films were successfully demonstrated in this country at the old Capitol Cinema in Haymarket in the September of 1926, it was left to William Fox to take this method of cinema entertainment into the big-time.

Fox, who came from Hungary, is another example of Poor Boy—Hard Work—Rich Man. He entered the picture business via ownership of a penny arcade in 1904. Later he took over two New York cinemas and so began the amassing of a vast fortune.

He rose to a peak of success when he gained control of Loew's Inc.—carrying with it the control of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer—and in the same year took over England's Gaumont-British by purchasing 45 per cent. of the stock.

Fox to-day has no connection with the industry, however. He took a big slap-down in the great American 1929 stock market crash and then became involved in a long drawn-out law suit. To-day his name persists only in the name of the firm Twentieth Century-Fox Films, in which he has no interest.

While Warners were experimenting with sound-on-disc Fox was pushing ahead with sound-on-film. It was Fox who, when he saw his first sound film recorded by the movietone method and was very impressed with it, was so disappointed when he was told that all sound films would have to be made within the four sound-proofed walls of the film studio that he walked into Case's office (Case was the inventor of Movietone) and said, "I'll give you a million dollars to spend if you can make the thing work out of doors." Within two months Case had overcome the difficulties of exterior recording and had made films of cowboys and Indians, trains crossing bridges and all kinds of other things, all accompanied by their correct and natural sounds.

As They Were : E. E. Horton with Edith Roberts in " The Front Page," the great newspaper story filmed under the direction of Howard Hughes, with Adolphe Menjou, Pat O'Brien, Mary Brian and Slim Summerville (1931).

As They Were : Reginald Owen, as he appeared with Malvina Longfellow, in a very early French film called " Phroso," from the story of the same title by Anthony Hope and directed by the late Louis Mercanton.

Fox, like the Warners, could not visualise the talkies as we know them to-day. Now that the movietone system had become practical he began to cast around for the best way to use it. He decided on the News Reel. And that was the start of the Movietone News Reel as we see it in the cinema programme now. It is interesting to note here that the first member of the Royal Family to speak for the Movietone News was the Prince of Wales (late Edward VIII) while the first statesman to use this new form of public platform was David Lloyd George.

III.

The public liked the new form of movie entertainment. They showed it in the way that matters, and as it is the moviemakers who must always bow to the public's desire—via the box-office—talkies began to be made. Reluctantly in many cases and with many misgivings, the big firms began to investigate the new medium and adapt their studios for it.

Quite rapidly the silent film became a thing of the past. *The Lights of New York* was the first all-talking picture ever to be made ; by Warners. While *Broadway Melody*, a grand film, set the ball rolling for a whole string of spectacular back-stage musicals.

In Britain the moviemakers did not readily adapt themselves to the new trend. They hung back and defiantly continued to produce silents. Again it was the box-office receipts that brought about the change in the end.

The success of the 1925 Capitol experiment was followed by *The Jazz Singer* at the Piccadilly Theatre in 1928. This in turn was followed by *The Terror*, in the October of that year, and which was the first all-talking film to be released in this country.

As the piles of silver were mounting up behind the pigeonholes of the Piccadilly the wiseacres and big-heads made all kinds of prophecies about the future end of the talkies craze ; and would their faces be red if I reprinted some of their public utterances of that time ?

The public knew what they wanted, however. They went to the cinemas advertising talkies and the houses showing silents

found their takings dropping off alarmingly. Finally, the inevitable happened, British producers decided that they too must go over to sound.

Kitty was half-finished at Elstree when this momentous decision swept the industry, and the company thereupon shipped the whole thing to America, with scenery and stars, to have it completed as a 100% talking picture. It was a crazy idea, with a hatful of snags, but it worked. When the film was finally shown it was found that it started talking right in the middle of a scene.

B.I.P., the famous firm that then held sway at Elstree, went on to make its first talkie, *Blackmail*, in which Hitchcock showed how quickly he had grasped the opportunities of the new medium. With reference to this movie it is amusing to recall that as the star of the piece was German, Anny Ondra, who could speak no word of English, her voice had to be " doubled " throughout the film by Joan Barry.

The abandonment of the silent film brought its own string of tragedies, of course. It brought unemployment too. The day of the cinema pianist and small orchestra was over ; one by one they were dismissed and only the largest super-cinemas later re-introduced an orchestra as a stage interlude.

Many stars were found entirely unsuited to the talkies. Some couldn't speak English and some that thought they could were found to be unintelligible. They faded out of the industry and what became of many of them is not generally known. Some took elocution lessons and made come-backs later on ; some just drifted around Hollywood hopeless failures unable to turn their backs on the place where they had made, and lost, fortunes and an industry that had petted them but now had no further interest in them ; some just faded—and died. A few of the more tougher stars found their way into other industries and made good there. But as Hollywood never speaks of its failures, and has no time for them anyway, the full history of this tragedy will probably never come to light.

When Garbo spoke, in *Anna Christie*, she created a sensation. Her deep voice made strange hearing for her public, and her Swedish accent made her new friends and new enemies. At one moment it looked to me as if Garbo would follow so many other

stars into the darkness of failure. But luckily she proved too fine an artiste and triumphed to retain her place as one of the screen's few great players.

John Gilbert, who had risen to fame and adulation opposite Garbo, and had earned the title "The World's Greatest Lover," was not so fortunate. Clara Bow, trying to overcome her nervousness when making her first talkie, spoke so heartily into the sensitive "mike," that the valves blew, and the cast had to be "laid off" for the day. Clive Brook and William Powell, stage actors and possessing good voices, could not say a single word above a croak and a whisper until they conquered their "terror" of the "mike."

IV.

What happened during the next ten years is contemporary history. I take it that nearly everyone who is interested enough to have bought this book must be in some measure a regular moviegoer and therefore knows practically as much about this period as I do.

During those years I have been seeing an average of 250 films a year as a film critic. Of that number, and in ten years that amounts to 2,500 movies, comparatively few stand out in my memory.

Technically the film has advanced a great deal since the first talkies, more so than is generally realised. To see *Broadway Melody* (which won the Award of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the best production in 1929) with any recently produced first-class musical film would prove the point.

Colour has come to the screen and recently been brought to the stage when it has become natural and pleasant to watch. *Wings of the Morning,* made in 1937 in our own British studios, with France's Annabella starring, was lovely, and in advance of the period. Now colour is generally being used intelligently, more sparingly, and the result has been a series of films which colour has embellished and beautified.

Disney, of course—of whom more in a moment—has used colour with terrific effect in his cartoons. But I am still eagerly waiting for the first Hitchcock colour film as I think then, for

Then and Now : Mickey Rooney with Frank Morgan in " Ring Up the Curtain," issued as " Broadway to Hollywood " in America (1933).

Then and Now : Mickey Rooney as he is to-day, years later in " Life Begins for Andy Hardy " (1941). Here he is with his talented young partner of so many films, the vivacious Judy Garland.

the first time, we shall see colour used as a new medium, as an aid to telling the story.

Most tremendous of all colour films—most tremendous of all films ever made in some respects—is that truly colossal show *Gone With the Wind*, which runs for nearly four hours.

The musical film has risen to great heights of spectacle. The gangster-movie cycle produced a whole series of brutal dramas, but has lately faded and died, and been replaced by a less frequent series of gangster satires in which the killers have been made to look rather silly.

In 1934 the Powell-Loy team starred in *The Thin Man*, which proved to the world that a murder could be mixed with a smile. The unrelieved horror-murder film died practically overnight and from then on a great many of these humorous murder-detection films have been made, culminating in such grand efforts as *The Ghost Breakers* (with Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard) which was one of the best in its line ever made.

In 1930 *Hell's Angels* started its run at the London Pavilion and soon had London flocking to see it. This movie, which cost nearly a million pounds and the lives of several stunt aviators to make, brought to the height of film fame that beautiful star the late Jean Harlow, whose combined glorious hair—she was the original Platinum Blonde—equally attractive face and figure, and flair for a certain type of acting, made her an outstanding film personality.

The talkies brought fame to a good many new comedians, and "curtains" to many more. Chaplin, suspicious of, and loath to try, the new medium, experimented gingerly with *City Lights*, but did not himself speak until *Modern Times*. Now he has made *The Dictator* and proved that his voice records splendidly. And *The Dictator* is certainly one of his greatest movies: passionately sincere, splendid propaganda and tremendously amusing.

W. C. Fields, who had been making films since he appeared in *Tilly's Punctured Romance*, has risen to stardom with the talkies, as have those crazy comics The Marx Brothers, who started off with *Coconuts* in 1932 and continued to make hysterically funny comedies until *The Big Store*, which they said was their last.

Laurel and Hardy survived sound by a careful restriction of its use and went on to make a series of full-length comedies which, though varying in quality, were generally laughable.

Eddie Cantor, who came to the screen from the Broadway stage in *Kid Boots* in 1924 used the old Keystone technique—slapstick fun with loads of feminine glamour—and made several extremely successful comedy musicals. Now Cantor's fame seems to have waned and his last film, not a musical, was far below his best.

Of an entirely different style was the late Will Rogers, whose homely philosophical quips brought him countless fans. Now Bob Hope, an Englishman who went to America when still a child, is, at the time of writing, the most popular funster at the box-office. He relies on wit, of which he seems to have more than a fair share, and his comedies are always extremely funny.

New directors of note have arisen. Frank Capra, an Italian by birth, and one-time Hal Roach gagman, who started off with making shorts for Columbia in 1921 and then went on to such films as *Platinum Blonde*, *American Madness*, *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, the whimsical *It Happened One Night* and a series of great movies, each one with a message for the times. John Ford, who made *The Informer*, the spectacular *Hurricane*, the sombre but splendid *Grapes of Wrath*, and one of the best Westerns ever put on the screen, *Stagecoach*. Frank Lloyd, who started a stage career at the age of 15 and entered pictures in 1910, who made *Cavalcade* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Frank Borzage, the master of sentiment, who started his stage career when but a year older than Lloyd and entered film business three years later than he, and made *Farewell to Arms*, *Seventh Heaven* and *No Greater Glory*.

Lewis Milestone, who made the greatest and most terrible war film of them all, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, that classic of newspaper melodrama *The Front Page* and the superb *Rain*. Gregory La Cava, former newspaper cartoonist and pioneer in film cartoons, who made the delightful *Affairs of Cellini*, the witty *My Man Godfrey* and *Stage Door*. W. S. Van Dyke who, apart from a string of successful musicals made *Hideout* and *The Thin Man*. Sam Wood, who came over here to make *Goodbye*

Mr. Chips and helped to make the Marxes *Night at the Opera* one of the best of their later films. Sidney Franklin who made the vividly contrasting *Good Earth* and *Private Lives*. And last, but certainly not least, our own Alfred Hitchcock, who followed his 39 *Steps* and *Man Who Knew Too Much* by his outstanding *Rebecca*, made in America.

New stars have arisen, far too many to even start cataloguing even the most brilliant of them, and some of them have faded again. Many stars have rushed like meteors through the skies to die after a brief gush of fame.

While on this star question is one point that strikes me as being extremely significant. Although there are now a great number of stars with many fans yet, as I see it, there is not one of the famous film people of to-day who enjoy anything like the adulation that the outstanding screen personalities such as Valentino had.

Yet undoubtedly the stars of to-day are better actors. What does this mean ? It means, I like to imagine, that the public are taking a more intelligent interest in the films they see and less interest in the players who appear in them. They like to see certain popular stars, admittedly, and these stars are a big draw at the box-office, but the public also demand that they appear in good films.

The moviegoing public are becoming more intelligently critical of their film fare year by year. That is, for a film critic, a cosy thought ! It might just possibly be self-deception, wistful thinking on my part. But I don't think it is.

But if the public demand better movies then better movies will be made. The higher the standard demanded the higher standard the films will keep. After all, as I have already said, it is the public, via the box-offices of the world, that in the end are the dictators of the industry. Let there be no mistake about that. The great majority of the people in the film business are there to make money out of it and because of that they must always bow to the box-office and the public who pile the silver up in it.

Then and Now : Clark Gable in 1931, with Norma Shearer in "Strange Interlude," right at the beginning of his long and very successful career.

Clark Gable as he is to-day, in "They Met in Bombay" (1941).

Then and Now : Judy Garland and Deanna Durbin in the first and only film they ever appeared in together. It was a short called "One Sunday Afternoon," and after this Miss Garland stayed with M.G.M. and went on to make her many movies, and Miss Durbin went across to Universal to star for them (1935).

V.

In other parts of the world during this period from 1929, the film was always progressing in diverse ways. In France the introduction of sound had met with the usual suspicion and opposition and the moviemakers there did not turn to the talkies until the public forced them to. Even then the progress was slow and few outstanding movies came out of France for quite a while. Of them the best known here were Rene Claire's *Le Million*, *Sous Les Toits de Paris* and *Le Dernier Millardaire*. Later Clair came to England to make the charming *The Ghost Goes West* with Robert Donat.

More recently the French industry began to turn out a steady flow of lovely movies ; made on tiny budgets (compared with America) for the most part, they showed imagination and originality. And every one of them was superbly acted. It is from France, indeed, that has come, during the past few years, some of the most beautiful and imaginative talkies ever made in any country. Two in particular, *La Kermesse Heroïque*, directed by Jacques Feyder (1936) and *Carnet de Bal* by Julien Duvivier (1938), are examples of the talking film as it should be. If you haven't seen these films and ever get the chance to, don't let the opportunity slip. Of an entirely different kind, were the several witty and extremely amusing Sacha Guitry movies which were all something of a one-man creation.

France also gave to the world such stars as Simone Simon, Jean Gabin, Danielle Darrieux and Michele Morgan (all to go to America at some time or other) and Harry Baur.

Germany produced *The Blue Angel* (starring the lovely Dietrich and directed by Josef von Sternberg –both of whom received Hollywood contracts through it) *Dr. Mabuse* by Fritz Lang and *Kameradschaft* by Pabst. Also the entertaining *Madchen in Uniform* (with Dorothea Wieck, who was also lured to Hollywood ; glamoured and forgotten) and *Emil and the Detectives*.

From the Austrian studios came *Maskerade*, starring the demure and lovely Paula Wesseley.

Later the German film industry became merely a branch of the Goebbels propaganda ministry and lost all its interest so far as the outside world was concerned.

The Russians—it must never be forgotten that they produce some of the greatest of all the silent films and at one time or another had both a direct and indirect effect on the films of every other country—output of sound films we have not seen much over here ; *The New Gulliver* was an outstanding puppet film, and *Professor Mamlock*, one of the most effective anti-Nazi film documents ever made.

Eisenstein and Pudovkin are giants of the cinema and their names must loom large in any story of the movies. Although the majority of their works were seldom, if ever, seen over here, and then by a tiny minority of filmgoers, their effect on the international film, if indirectly, must have been immense.

We have seen few Italian talkies and those we have were either weak or downright bad. From the other countries of the world we have seen but little, yet they have all been producing films. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Hungary, Poland, India, Greece, Rumania, Czecho-Slovakia, Turkey, Spain, and even Japan, where according to figures I have, the production of films over the past few years has at least equalled, and possibly exceeded, that of the American studios in numbers.

Of the future ? Well, who knows ? At the best we can only peer through a glass darkly, especially when the drums of war are shaking the whole world as never before.

That television will play a big part in future cinema entertainment seems inevitable. Already this form of radio has made great strides and although to-day all television is cancelled in this country owing to the war—and the inventive initiative has once more again automatically passed across the Atlantic to America, it had, even before the start of the war, reached a state of practical entertainment value. In the March of 1939 I wrote :—

" Paradoxically the film event of last week was a television relay. A friend of ours who was at the Tatler at the showing of the Boon-Danahar fight was extraordinarily impressed by it. ' It was amazing,' he said ' the people behaved as if they were actually in the Harringay Arena. They clapped and booed and

were quite as enthusiastic as the ringside audience. Once, when the image jumped and shook (due to slight technical fault) and gave the impression of a shaky camera somebody shouted out ' Hold it steady old chap.'

" Our friend's impression was not an isolated case. Other people we have spoken to who witnessed the televised fight were equally convinced that television in the camera has a tremendous future and, more important, a *very near* future.

" Another point is that the audience were paying considerably higher prices for this televised fight than they were used to paying for their films. And they were perfectly satisfied. That, in itself is enough to make an intelligent person sit up and think hard.

" A sequel to all this is the announcement over the week-end that Gaumont are going to instal television in 350 of their cinemas. Cinema-television has arrived. Of that there cannot be the slightest doubt.

" The cinema industry has become convinced that the possibilities of relaying sporting—and other—events while they are actually happening are tremendous. The public that have seen large screen television working are equally convinced."

VI.

Which brings me to the newsreel. The newsreel is nearly as old, indeed is quite as old, as the moving picture. Some of the first films were actually the kind of thing which to-day we find in the newsreel. It has always been an important ingredient of the cinema programme but in recent years it has failed to keep up with the story movies, has failed to pack a hard enough punch. Then came *The March of Time* (made by the publishers of the famous American News Magazine *Time*) to bring a new vigour and imaginative treatment to the topics of the day. *The March of Time* takes a problem and discusses it from every angle; forcefully, factually—but not refusing to reconstruct a few scenes if by so doing it advances the interest of the subject—it presents the world, the people in it and their problems. " *Time Marches On* " has become one of the world's best-known slogans.

Heroine : Ingrid Bergmann, Swedish star who has rapidly risen to the top, with Gary Cooper in her latest movie, " For Whom the Bell Tolls " (1943).

Heroine : Marguerite Clarke, one of the great favourites of the silent screen, in what was then the height of film fashion.

Heroine : Vivien Leigh, little English girl who swept to stardom overnight with her performance as Scarlet O'Hara in " Gone With the Wind."

I hope that the newsreel of the future will learn its lesson from this feature. I trust that the news films we shall be seeing after this war will be a combination of the reel as we know it to-day and the *March of Time* feature.

At any rate I do hope that those idiotic and entirely uninteresting sequences of big-wigs laying foundation-stones, mayors patting children's chins in hospital wards and nobility at a hunt ball will have gone from the screen for ever—and a day.

VII.

The stereoscopic film is another big possibility of the future. So far experiments in this direction have not been particularly successful although the *Audioscopics* produced at the Empire as a novelty item in the programme (you had to view them through a special pair of celluloid glasses, one eyepiece being green and the other red) captured the illusion perfectly and were both amusing and interesting.

That colour will eventually be used far more extensively than it is to-day I have no doubt, but I shall be surprised, and perhaps a little disappointed, if it entirely takes the place of the black and white film. For I feel that there are many subjects to which colour can only add production costs.

To-day the motion picture is doing a great job. Apart from showing the world how Britain is standing up against the Nazis and preparing to beat them I think it is not too much to say that it was the cinemas, playing gallantly on in London, Portsmouth, Southampton and all those other places that have suffered worst in the greatest bombardment from the air ever known, was one of the big factors in keeping up the public morale.

Bombs have fallen outside cinemas, doors have been flung open by blast, plaster has fallen from the ceiling and, in one case, a piece of kerbstone came through the roof and fell in the aisle (luckily without hurting anybody) and yet the staffs have gone on calmly with their work in every case ; have closed the doors ; calmed the public by their matter-of-fact attitude and carried on until the end of the programme.

Finally, let me say just one thing. The movies are a crazy business when you see them from the inside, but they do get into your blood. I love them and as I'm a film critic and have to live with them for 52 weeks a year perhaps that's just as well. And next time you go to the movies remember this : you are only one of 33,000,000 doing the same thing on the same day.

APPENDIX I.

THE CARTOON.

The cartoon film is nearly as old as the story film. It was away back in 1908 that Emile Cohl made his 100-foot *Phantasmagoria* and this, crude though it was, can be considered as being the first real film cartoon, just as Cohl, who went on to make a series of similar productions, can be justly put into the story of the films as the first practical film cartoonist. *Phantasmagoria* needed 2,000 separate drawings ; to-day a cartoon such as Disney's *Reluctant Dragon* will need more than 20,000 separate drawings.

The cartoons improved, but it was not until 1917 that a character appeared which gained something of the notoriety of a human star ; this was Pat Sullivan's famous *Felix the Cat*, who, you will remember, went on walking, and even had songs written about him.

The same year saw the first colour cartoon, coloured by the same tedious process as the film painted all those years ago by the lantern-slide painter at the Polytechnic ; laboriously coloured frame by frame. This caused no furore at the time, but Bud Fisher's *Mutt and Jeff* did ; they became very popular. Also in 1917 came the first of Beauren's amusing *Aesop's Fables*.

The following year saw Anson Dyer in Britain start the first series of British cartoons and in America it saw an event of far greater importance in the advent of Walt Disney, the greatest cartoonist of them all and one of the greatest artists, in the true sense of that often ill-used word, that the screen has ever produced.

Disney, who can trace German, Irish, Canadian as well as American blood in his veins, was born in Chicago 40 years ago. After driving an ambulance in France during the 1914-18 War he got a job as commercial artist, a poorly-paid job from which he was eventually sacked.

Disney had several other jobs but soon became fired with the ambition to make a film cartoon. He made several attempts but they were not commercial successes.

West is West : Marlene Dietrich as a Saloon Girl in " Flame of New Orleans' " (1941), with Bruce Cabot.

East is East : Lon Chaney, son of deaf-and-dumb parents, became famous after his performance as a bogus cripple in " The Miracle Man " (1919). For the next twelve years he continually sent shudders running up and down the spines of the moviegoers with his work. One of his big successes was as the hunchback in " The Haunchback of Notre Dame," another in the title role in " The Phantom of the Opera." This scene is with Lupe Velez in " Where East is East " (1929). Chaney died in 1930.

However, he doggedly carried on with his experimenting and decided at last that to make good he would have to learn the film business from the inside. So the young Disney went to Hollywood.

The going was pretty hard at first, Hollywood only has room for successes, and if you haven't got a long list of " credits " (successes) behind you nobody is very interested in you. In no other place in the world does success so obviously bring success as in the film colony. But Disney persevered and eventually started the *Oswald the Rabbit* series, and then *Mickey the Mouse.*

In connection with the birth of Mickey there is a story which, although re-told many times has, so far as I know, never been actually verified. Anyway it makes a good story so I'm taking the chance of re-telling it once again.

When Disney was a commercial artist, the story goes, he was working in a Kansas City office and would often stay there long after everyone else had gone home. It was then that the mice would come out to pick up crumbs left over from the day's lunch packets, and they eventually got so used to the young artist working there that they played and ate their picnic meals round him without worry. Disney caged some of them and from these picked out one which after a time became so tame that it would sit on his table and pose for him as he worked.

Mickey was born with the name of Mortimer, but that was changed. When eventually sound was added to Mickey's antics he leapt to stardom, and Disney to fame, in one great stride. From then on Disney has never looked back. His first black-and-white Silly Symphony, the weird *Skeleton Dance,* was soon followed by his first really beautiful creation, the fully technicolored and imaginative *Flowers and Trees.*

In 1937 Disney presented his first full-length cartoon *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs,* a great creation and followed it with *Pinnochio* in 1940.

Several of Disney's latest full feature-length creations have been novelties. *Fantasia* is an attempt, and not altogether unsuccessful attempt, to put on the screen the impressions created by music ; a symphony of sight and sound. *The Reluctant Dragon* is a combination of real people and cartoon which for the first

time shows how large a business Disney has built up. It takes you behind the scenes and shows you how he makes his cartoon movies.

Apart from Disney there are, even to-day, few artists of outstanding cartoon creative ability. One of the few is Max Fleischer, a former newspaper cartoonist, art editor and producer of scientific and technical shorts, who was responsible for the popular "*Pop-Eye the Sailor*" series and then the full-length *Gulliver's Travels*, which introduced a great little character in Gabby, the night watchman, and several melodies that swept the world. Earlier Fleischer has earned a measure of fame with his *Out of the Inkwell* series.

There are several other film cartoonists of promise, but they have yet to produce anything as outstanding as either Disney or Fleischer.

Incidentally, as a footnote, I have recently learned that a relation of mine, a Speed, was one of the pioneers of the British cartoon.

FOOTNOTE TO THE 3rd EDITION.

In view of the fact that this book was written during the blitz period, some three years ago, and a great deal can—and, indeed, has happened since then, I feel a few notes are needed to bring this new edition of Movie Cavalcade up-to-date.

A few observations: In the first case the moviemakers have had to learn all over again in this war what they were taught during the last; that a people at war do not go to the pictures to see it on the screen. A year or two ago we were flooded by war pictures, many of them made in Hollywood by people who wouldn't know a war if they met one. The results were rather sickening. In the same way they rushed through film after film showing Britain "taking it" from the German bombers. To us over here many were ridiculous, being completely wrong in detail. Eventually the public, both here and in America, made their objection to these types of films felt at the box-office. Hollywood, amazed, hurt and frightened, changed its policy almost overnight. Proposed war films were shelved, musicals and light comedies taking their place on the studio floor.

The position to-day, as I write, is that we are still getting war films but they are now few and far between—which is exactly as it should be.

A strange war-time development has been that while the American film has, by and large, fallen in the doldrums and the general production deteriorated, conversely the British film has risen to the occasion and been doing better than ever before, though production difficulties have been so much greater in every possible way.

There is now, in this country, two distinct schools of thought as to what kind of films we should turn out. On the one hand there are those who say that we should make our films on small budgets, so that even if they never appear on a single American or foreign screen they can still take enough money in this country to make their production a commercial proposition. On the other hand we have those who maintain that British films must challenge the Americans on their own ground, that instead of spending £80,000 on a picture we must spend £200,000

A scene from " High Treason " a British Gaumont film directed by Maurice Elvey and starring Benita Hume. The picture is interesting in that though made in 1926 it was a story of things to come, these including Television (you'll notice the screen beneath the clock), massed air raids by giant bombers and the conscription of women.

A spectacular indoor set from Abel Gance's " Napoleon " (1924). Gance re-made the film as a talkie, using bits and pieces from the earlier movie of the same title.

and, by sheer star value and high standard of production, force our wares into the American markets.

To the former group belong people like Michael Balcon, who controls the destinies of Ealing Studios, and Maurice Ostrer, head of Gainsborough Pictures; while on the other side of the fence is newcomer J. Arthur Rank, Yorkshire flour-milling millionaire who became interested in films as a religious medium in the first case but who is now the largest figure in both the making and distribution sides of the business, and Alexander Korda, who has now returned to this country, backed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer millions, to make Big pictures.

Rank believes in bigger and better British films and he is backing the first firm to go ahead on these lines since the start of the war: Two Cities Films Ltd., of whom the managing director is a charming and very clever Italian lawyer, F. Del Giudice. It is to him and to his firm we owe some of the finest pictures ever made in this country: *In Which We Serve*, which saw Noel Coward get his first chance at film directing and producing *The Gentle Sex*, the film about the A.T.S. which Leslie Howard made (he was killed a little later when the airplane on which he was returning from Lisbon after a goodwill tour in Spain was attacked by a German machine and sent crashing into the sea); *The Lamp Still Burns*, directed by veteran Maurice Elvey and produced by Leslie Howard (his last film), and several others.

As a guide to how the struggle is going, it is interesting to note that recently F. Del Giudice has been elected to the board of Gainsborough Pictures, which rather looks as though Mr. Rank is determined that Gainsborough, too, shall make bigger and better British pictures.

So much for the British Industry which, at this moment, is at the division of the ways. It remains to see whether at the end of the war it is firmly and solidly established or whether, as at the end of the last war, it is a colossos with feet of clay which will come tumbling down. I think, and I hope, the former will be the case.

Now, what else has happened? Well, colour has made great strides and each year more and more films are forsaking black-and-white for the lively tones of Technicolor. With

A scene from "The Jazz Singer," first talking picture, made in 1928. Al Jolson was the first star to benefit from sound film and made fame and a fortune from it.

"These new-fangled motor cars are a curse." A typical scene from an old silent, "Three Week ends," rather daringly titled Clara Bow film.

several more colour processes in the experimental stages it now becomes more than ever obvious that colour will be the rule and black-and-white the exception in the quite early future.

Walt Disney has gone on experimenting and while he has made a number of cartoons including the exquisite *Bambi*—he has also made a very significant film called *Victory Through Air Power*. Though the great majority of filmgoers were disappointed in this, those who are interested in the film and its future found this latest Disney excursion exciting. The film is actually a lecture illustrated by a large number of diagrams and maps and enlivened in a few cases by cartoon. If it did nothing else, it proved what a great future the film has in the educational field, for in about an hour one learnt more than one could from fifty times that amount of book reading.

There are a great many more things I could, and would like to say, but a long chapter in this place would outweigh the rest of the book and therefore I must resist the temptation. The future is as misty as it ever was but I don't think there is any longer any doubt in the minds of the great majority of people what a great power for good and evil that the film possesses. Its potentialities in the coming peace are terrific, its important position in the schoolrooms of the future undisputed. And as obvious is the fact that it will, in the future as in the past, be the most popular form of entertainment for the masses. There, in fact, lies its greatest power.

MARTIN'S PRINTING WORKS BERWICK